

Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial  
History, Language, and Identity in selected works by Edwidge Danticat and Junot Díaz

by

Camilo Chiappe Bejar

A dissertation submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

UCL

I, Camilo Chiappe Bejar confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

---

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis argues for a reassessment of the concept of extraterritorial literature—a term coined by George Steiner in the late sixties to highlight the global approach of nomad authors who refused to belong to a single national tradition by means of linguistic experimentation. It does so by examining a variety of examples from the work of Edwidge Danticat and Junot Díaz, two authors born in separate nations within the same island (Hispaniola) who live in the United States and who write in a language strange yet adjacent to their countries of origin. Danticat and Díaz express their extraterritoriality through three different approaches: By reframing the ‘official’ historical discourse of Haiti and the Dominican Republic in the 20<sup>th</sup> century perpetuated by the military regimes of the Duvaliers and Trujillo; by diversifying theories of identity creation and the migrant’s role within and outside of his or her diaspora; and by reconfiguring the elocution of a new extraterritorial language which challenges pre-established parameters through the subversion of Core languages.

On a larger scale, this thesis contends that, in an increasingly fluid contemporary world, extraterritorial literature can serve as a counterpoint to the insular concerns of canonical systems of classification and standardised concepts of national literature. As such, extraterritorial literature also asks us to reconsider labels such as post-nationalism and cosmopolitanism as flights of fancy detached from the harsh realities

instilled by the many levels of economic and cultural inequality between nations. Whereas Goethe saw comparative literature as a practice founded upon dialogues between national literatures, extraterritorial literature transcends frontiers by embracing its own complexities and inherent incompleteness, ultimately helping to construct liminal scopes and a framework for the constant critique of literary terminology itself.

## Impact Statement

This thesis focuses on the literary work of two contemporary multilingual immigrant authors from Haiti and the Dominican Republic. It attempts to show the many ways in which migrant narratives are constructed and, as such, it transcends the field of comparative literature and employs a multidisciplinary approach that includes theories from a range of specialities. The introduction serves as a review of existing and contiguous material pertaining to the concept of 'extraterritorial literature', and could be used as a resource for drafting a syllabus on the overlapping of migration studies and literary inquiry. The first chapter deals primarily with historiography, proposing a cross-boundary reading of the shared history between Haiti and the Dominican Republic and their relationship to the United States. The second chapter focuses on the linguistic tools employed by these authors to articulate their narratives, combining close textual analysis with theories of language and translation. The third chapter uses sociology as the basis for exploring issues of identity construction and diasporic narratives. Lastly, the epilogue proposes new methods for the study of migrant literature, arguing that the existing over-reliance of canons and classifications based on nation and language are limited and inappropriate for contemporary works that transcend boundaries and taxonomies. As such, this thesis could be of interest to researchers focusing on Haitian and Dominican literature, exophonic and multilingual literature, extraterritorial language, identity creation through textual representations, migration and diasporic studies– while serving as a source of reference for anyone interested in the construction of narratives in flux, and how these can be used as a pedagogic method of multicultural instruction.

## CONTENTS

Introduction.....	8
<b>Chapter I: History</b>	
I. People's Instinctive Travels and The Silenced Paths of History.....	46
II. A brief history of Hispaniola.....	49
III. A Zafa for every Fukú: Redressing Trujillo in <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> .....	61
IV. Cutting Through Time: The Parsley Massacre in <i>The Farming of Bones</i> .....	73
V. Towards An Extraterritorial History.....	89
<b>Chapter II: Language</b>	
I. Vessels of Speech: The extraterritorial language of Edwidge Danticat and Junot Díaz.....	102
II. Transcending the Extraterritorial.....	107
III. Yunior as Saint Jerome: Methods of Translation in <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> .....	111
IV. Decolonising Lenguaje.....	127
V. Lòt bò dlo: The Other Side of Language in <i>Brother, I'm Dying</i> and the work of Edwidge Danticat.....	137
VI. Deterritorialising The Extraterritorial.....	159
<b>Chapter III: Identity</b>	
I. Life Along the Borderline.....	168
II. From Diaspora to Where?.....	171
III. The Uses of Identity: Identity Construction in Edwidge Danticat's 'Caroline's Wedding' and Junot Díaz's 'How To Date A Brown Girl (Black Girl, White Girl, or Halfie)'.....	178
IV. The Politics of Inclusion: Rejection and Acceptance in Junot Díaz's 'Drown'.....	189
V. Self Reflexivity: Awareness and Politics in Edwidge Danticat's 'New York Day Women'.....	206
VI. The Liminal Borders of Extraterritorial Identity: Danticat's <i>The Dew Breaker</i> and Díaz's short stories.....	213
Epilogue.....	225
Bibliography.....	239

‘Tell us what it is to be a woman so that we may  
know what it is to be a man.  
What moves at the margin.  
What it is to have no home in this place.  
To be set adrift from the one you knew.  
What it is to live at the edge of towns that  
cannot bear your company.’

Toni Morrison (Nobel Lecture, 1993)

## **Introduction**

### **The Edges of Narrative**

Borders, both real and fictional, are born out of a necessity to delineate the private from the public, and contemporary societies, with their ever more blatant disparities, show an increasing amount of imaginary rifts made real. From the psychological constructs of racism to the administrative demarcations of nation states, these invented divisions serve to create a narrative of difference, perpetuating communities, as Benedict Anderson pointed out, 'distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (2006: 48).<sup>1</sup> This segregated fashioning of identity disconnects the individual from what is 'other' and reinforces her or his allegiances with the immediacy of superficial cohesions. Lives in motion, however, seldom follow the limitations dictated by pre-conditioned narratives, and it is in the dramatic clash between reality and fiction, between expectations and certainty, between profound injustice and the wish for equality, where we find the extraterritorial.

The materialisation of borders in today's world is made evident in several societal norms we take for granted; starting, for instance, with the queues at passport

---

<sup>1</sup> Anderson's definition of nations as imagined communities can be summed up, in his own words, as follows: 'I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion [...] Finally, [the nation] is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willing to die for such limited imaginings.' (2006: 48-49)



control found at most gateway points to countries. Countries that often portray a mirage of stable identities, forcibly made visible through methods of exclusion exemplified by the rituals of border crossing. It is a known procedure for the seasoned traveller: Those returning home earn the right to shorter waiting times, while visitors and temporary residents fill bureaucratic forms stating their intentions of goodwill and the promise to leave the land at some determined point in time. It is a transaction full of sighs and fatigue that defines identity through documentation, simplifying complexity for the sake of categorisation. This, of course, if one is fortunate enough to have an acceptable form of identification. There are travellers holding dangerous credentials, citizens of nations that are often referred to with the same adjectives: turbulent, unsettled, chaotic. These so called high-risk individuals will, more often than not, never meet the culprits of their international demotion in the hierarchy of scrutiny, and are instead forced to fill more forms and wait for longer periods of time. And yet, this is still not as perilous a journey as the one taken by the ever-increasing multitudes of undocumented travellers, those crossing the deserts of Sonora by foot, hiding in the back of cargo vehicles, standing still inside a congested boat drifting near the maritime borders of Europe. These trajectories are daily experiences that are habitually irrecoverable, lost in the manic times of adaptation that follow a successful crossing, seldom reported with the importance and detail these stories demand or, in even scarcer situations, told by the protagonists themselves.

From past to present, every migratory experience is unique and should compile more than facts and numbers to be objectively represented. However, the patterns and settings of these journeys are, in most cases, a direct result of the wealth an individual has been born into or previously accrued before the act of travel—in contemporary

metropolises, affluent moguls will be received with vaults wide open by cities willing to cater to their needs, while so called low-skilled workers find suspicion at every stage of their relocation. The late capitalist world would not have it any other way: currency, like prejudice, thrives on material subjectivity. This subjectivity, however, can be, at least rhetorically, readdressed. Not by simplification, but by exalting the complexities found within the routes of migrant lives. In this sense, the creation of narrative represents a method of paramount importance in the construction of agency, the first step towards the exposition of inequality. Narrative confers the individual with the tools to reconfigure her or his story as a means of empowerment through elocution—and the work of the two writers featured in this thesis serves as a clear example of the positive results that disordered circumstances can sporadically bring about both to individuals and to collective thought.

*Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial* focuses on selected books by and interviews with Edwidge Danticat and Junot Díaz, two first-generation immigrant authors born on different sides of the Caribbean island known as Hispaniola. Their work is heavily reliant on the personal trajectories taken by their families to build a new life in the East coast of the United States, and, through the writing of stories, it questions not only the reasons behind their relocation, but also the imbalanced relationship between the Dominican Republic and Haiti with their northern neighbour; a relationship full of layers filled with misinformation and patched with silences. To date (December 2017), there has been no major comparative work solely devoted to both authors' output, although given the velocity with which analyses related to their corpus are becoming available, it would not be a surprise if such study became a reality in the coming years. The present thesis, however, does not aim to be a thorough review of Díaz's or

Danticat's work. Rather, it uses their books as an illustration of the theory of extraterritorial literature.

### **On Extraterritorial Literature**

One of the prevalent challenges for contemporary theory when dealing with topics of migrant literature is that of finding a defined nomenclature that encompasses all boundary-crossing experiences in a single practical idiom. However, this same lack of settlement falls in line with the fluidity of migratory narratives, and it should be seen as an opportunity to find the nuances that taxonomy and canon creation attempt to homogenise. One theory that aims to celebrate these differences can be found in Kwame Anthony Appiah's concept of cosmopolitanism, an attempt to engage with the contemporary condition of individuals who hold a plethora of roots (and often multiple passports) from diverse parts of the world. Arguing from a humanist perspective against the perils of national consciousness and cultural isolation, Appiah writes:

People are different, the cosmopolitan knows, and there is much to learn from our differences. Because there are so many human possibilities worth exploring, we neither expect nor desire that every person or every society should converge on a single mode of life. (Appiah, 2007: 15)

Laudable as these thoughts might be, cosmopolitanism has long suffered from holding a tag that carries connotations of privilege and social detachment. Attempting to take the term into the realm of social justice, academics such as James Clifford and Bruce Robbins explored the idea of plural 'cosmopolitanisms' (the former with 'discrepant cosmopolitanisms' and the latter with 'comparative cosmopolitanisms'), drawing lines between the freedoms and limitations of transnational individuals in a globalised world. Closer to the realm of literary studies is the work of Rebecca L.

Walkowitz, who restructured Paul Rabinow's concept of 'critical cosmopolitanism' and applied it to modernist (in the Anglophone sense of the word) literature in her book *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation*.<sup>2</sup> However, as Brett Neilson pointed out, these studies all seem to overwhelmingly come from U.S.-centric academic circles, and the current reactionary backlash of recent years in the public sphere against the type of 'liberal establishment' for which cosmopolitanism remains a pillar, is tangible proof that the cosmopolitan cause has not successfully transcended (or been successfully translated out of) its own milieu.

Furthermore, while there is a sense of cosmopolitanism in the work of Díaz and Danticat (most explicitly in their urban, multicultural, upbringing in the East Coast of the United States), the terminology falls short when getting to grips with the linguistic methods they employ. Much like Steiner argued that 'there can be, conceivably, be language without literature, artificial or computer languages may satisfy this negative condition: there can be no literature without language,' (1972: 135) I would posit that the existence of cosmopolitan literature as a category does not presuppose the same for a cosmopolitan language.<sup>3</sup> Using the term 'cosmopolitan language' would mean

---

<sup>2</sup> Talking about the work of her primary subjects, which include usual suspects such as Joyce, Woolf and Sebald, Walkowitz states: 'I argue that these writers have used the salient features of modernist narrative [...] to develop a critical cosmopolitanism. This has meant thinking beyond the nation but also comparing, distinguishing, and judging among different versions of transnational thought; testing moral and political norms, including the norms of critical thinking; and valuing informal as well as transient models of community' (2007: 2).

<sup>3</sup> Homi Bhabha has frequently used the oxymoron 'vernacular cosmopolitanism', yet his theories on language are also reticent to cataloguing the work of migrant writers solely under the banner of cosmopolitanism, choosing instead to emphasise the translational qualities of linguistic processes, instead of a singular type of language. He writes: 'Transdisciplinary knowledge, in the cosmopolitan cause, is more readily a translational process of culture's inbetweenness than a transcendent knowledge

navigating far too close to the aspirational codes of globalisation that drive the metropolises of the world, codes which still remain dislocated from prevalent issues of social inequality, while limiting itself to its Eurocentric (in the case of this terminology, both conceptually and etymologically, Ancient Greek) origins. The 'kosmos' of individuals in today's world is never the same, and always subject to the limitations of one's privilege. Close to the aspirations of a single cosmopolis, the term 'post-national', celebrated by texts in the early 21st century such as Eliot Weinberger's 'Statement for the Post-National Writer' (2005), has, due to the political and social context of recent years, been discredited as nothing more than utopia<sup>4</sup>—not only does it not linguistically recognise the substantial differences between nations and nation states, it also avoids the fact that, as long as there are Olympic Games and World Cups in which sportsmen and women weep at the tune of their respective anthems, we will not be able to omit nationality, whose symbolic power remains deeply entrenched in our conception of identity, from the debate.

More linguistically-inclined parallel theories which knowingly centre their arguments on the methods used by immigrant authors to construct narratives have been devised over the last two decades, particularly in Germany, where terms such as *Migrantenliteratur* have become widespread and commonly utilised by academics and literary critics. Wary of the lack of specificity in such overarching categories, further differentiations have been developed, each with their own subtle idiosyncrasies that

---

of what lies beyond difference, in some common pursuit of the universality of the human experience' (2002: 6-7).

<sup>4</sup> Chantal Wright makes a good case for the limitations of the term, which have only shrunk further over the last ten years, arguing that post-national: 'appears overly optimistic in its assumption of the steady decline in the primacy of the nation state as a core unit of identity and power. It also suggests a cultural fluidity within the borders of the nation state which does not (yet) hold true.' (2008: 30)

serve to distinguish authors who either focus on border-crossing thematics, as is the case of ‘axial’ writing, used for ‘travelling writers whose lives are lived on, and whose work chronicles the traffic on, the geographical (but also remembered and imagined) pathways of mass migration’ (Cheesman in Wright, 2008: 28) or ‘exophonic writing’, which denotes literature written in a language other than the author’s mother tongue. While useful when referring to specific examples, these theories and terminologies are very much related to the context in which they were formulated (in this case quite explicitly the German literary world), and their inextricability from the field of written language does not make them wholly synonymous to the liminal properties of the extraterritorial that this thesis aims to promote.

George Steiner briefly sketched the adaptation of the term ‘extraterritorial’ to literary studies in the late 1960s to define authors who refused, by means of linguistic experimentation, to align themselves with a single national identity.<sup>5</sup> This theory, however, was not advanced by Steiner to include authors outside of the European or European-derived literary canon (his case studies were limited to Beckett, Nabokov and Borges)—By choosing to focus on the work of Díaz and Danticat (and the comparative opportunities of a male/female, Dominican/Haitian dichotomy) *Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial* aims to expand the term by looking beyond the parameters of what has so far been enclosed, in terms of primary examples, to the work created by male authors of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. However, instead of creating terminology from scratch, this thesis chooses to align with and reconfigure the concept of extraterritoriality for a few practical reasons: First, extraterritorial literature is a

---

<sup>5</sup> A more expansive definition of Steiner’s theory, particularly related to his notion of extraterritorial language and the context that shaped it, can be found in Chapter II, pp. 107-111.

proposition that starts and ends with language, a language that knowingly transcends boundaries and plays a fundamental role in the construction of narratives in flux. Second, from an etymological perspective and in terms of its original legislative use, extraterritorial denotes the antithesis of personal jurisdiction—it is a shared instrument and, as such, no single entity or nation state can own these concepts.<sup>6</sup> Third, it transcends the land, or at least a single parcel of land, yet unlike more utopic concepts, it roots itself in the present configuration of the world and acknowledges the existence of territories and their historical characteristics. Lastly, Steiner himself left the term unfinished, and did not develop the theory of extraterritoriality to its broadest potential, thus offering the idiom significant room for manoeuvre while providing the theory with the constant fluidity its exponents portray.

Far from taking the theory of extraterritorial literature at face value or exclusively utilising Steiner's admittedly limited definitions, this thesis also examines critiques from opposing views, such as those produced by Stuart Hall or Saul Friedländer, which place an emphasis on Steiner's reluctance to look beyond his Eurocentric gnosis. Although the reconfiguration of the concept still bases itself on linguistic forms, it also serves as an expansion to examine issues of race and social inequality, topics that are at the very core of contemporary migratory movements and diasporic identities. The use of multi-referential methods that outline the heavily

---

<sup>6</sup> This shared instrument represents the difference between using the term 'American extraterritoriality' to 'extraterritorial literature in the United States', the former would erroneously lay claim to the concept, while the latter remains open to influences from other histories while acknowledging its current place of elocution, thus making the concept easily transposable between regions for future comparative analyses. The epistemological possibilities that result from employing these terminologies and their potential use in syllabus construction are discussed in this thesis' Epilogue, p. 231.

politicised, often experimental, language found in the work of Díaz and Danticat serves as one of the modalities of analysis for the second chapter of this thesis, which attempts to transfer the term extraterritorial from Steiner's perspective to a style that falls more in line with the overtly political work of one of Steiner's most ardent critics: Edward Said.<sup>7</sup> Speaking of the parallels between the 'liberation of language' and political action in his reading of Paul Virilio's *Open Sky*, Said wrote:

[...] Virilio suggests that the modernist project of liberating language/speech (*la libération de la parole*) has a parallel in the liberation of critical spaces—hospitals, universities, theatres, factories, churches, empty buildings; in both, the fundamental transgressive act is to inhabit the normally uninhabited. As examples, Virilio cites the cases of people whose current status is the consequence either of decolonization (migrant workers, refugees, *Gastarbeiter*) or of major demographic and political shifts (Blacks, immigrants, urban squatters, students, popular insurrections, etc.). These constitute a real alternative to the authority of the state. (1994: 395)

In his essay 'Reflections on Exile', Said referred to the dislocation of migrant authors as 'exile'—a word that implies the existence of a homeland and the fractured, often nostalgic, relationship between memory and the individual. Crucially, Said maintained that before paying attention to those authors free to roam in languages and transcend nation-states with ease we should first think of 'the uncountable masses for whom UN agencies have been created (...) the compounded misery of undocumented people suddenly lost, without a tellable story' (1984: 51). In terms of literary criticism, he also urged us to 'map territories of experience beyond those mapped by the

---

<sup>7</sup> In a review of *Extraterritorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution* for *The New York Times*, Said briefly applauds of Steiner's literary insights when analysing extraterritorial authors, but he defines his lack of thoroughness as 'a deft jumble of cultural correlatives,' and particularly castigates Steiner's lack of political and social acumen, concluding that 'the most irritating thing about Steiner now is that his undoubted perspicacity and near-genius for sighting cultural shifts in emphasis is being wasted in collections like "*Extraterritorial*"' (Said, 1971).



literature of exile itself' (1984: 51). This might be a constructive start when dealing with literature and migration, but it is one that, much like Steiner's extraterritorial, also needs updating. The proliferation of air travel, communication technologies and cultural expansionism through globalisation means the generations that followed Said's wistful yearning are not overtly concerned merely with returning to their native land. Recreating that irretrievable past to fill the void left by a lack of belonging is an important preoccupation, but no longer their ultimate goal; instead, we find the construction of a fluid language that has no set residence. However, calling this new type of literature 'post-exilic' pre-supposes that the return to the homeland is no longer a driving force, yet it remains grammatically attached to the idea of it. This in turn diminishes the dramatic components of exile, giving way to new avenues of thought related to contemporary and historical migration from the point of view of migrants themselves.

In this sense, Said's theory of 'exile' is, alongside Braudel's '*longue durée*' in the first chapter, Mignolo's 'decolonisation' in the second chapter, and Edwards' 'diaspora' in the third chapter, contiguous yet not wholly synonymous to this thesis' vision of what the extraterritorial language entails. Methodologically speaking, *Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial* is built on the reassessment of pre-existing theories from a multitude of disciplines. One of the aims of this thesis is to act as a framework for analysing not only the work of Danticat and Díaz, but also, in future opportunities, other authors who could be considered to employ an extraterritorial language in their writing. As such, part of the reconfiguration of the extraterritorial in this thesis is built with beams borrowed from other structures, not merely from the field of comparative literary criticism, but also from historiographical, linguistic and sociological approaches—all

deeply associated with the scopes used by theorists working on the kind of literary theory that operates within the geographical limits of the American continent (particularly zooming in and out of the Caribbean and its resulting diasporas). Although Steiner loosely defined the term 'extraterritorial' in the very specific context of the late 1960s, this present iteration is designed to include and relate to other theories that were not discussed in his work, several of which have been developed since.

When research for *Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial* began, studies deriving from Steiner's theory of the extraterritorial were too scarce to mention. However, the last few years have seen the sporadic publication of essays and compilations that use the term mostly to analyse modernist works of literature of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Rainier Grutman's essay 'Migration and Territoriality in Deleuze and Steiner: Metaphors and Mixed Messages' deals primarily with the works of Thomas Mann and Vladimir Nabokov, while the compilation *Ex(tra)territorial. Reassessing Territory in Literature, Culture and Languages / Les Territoires littéraires, culturels et linguistiques en question* edited by Didier Lassalle and Dirk Weissmann includes texts that examine the concept of extraterritoriality from its earliest incarnations in 17<sup>th</sup>-century legal language up until mid 20<sup>th</sup>-century literary texts.<sup>8</sup> The approach of *Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial* bases its uniqueness on the resolutely contemporary condition of its case studies—in the case of Díaz and Danticat, books that have been written from the second half of the 1990s up until the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

---

<sup>8</sup> We can add to this list Matthew Hart's yet-to-be-published study *Extraterritorial: A Political Geography of Contemporary Fiction*, forthcoming from Columbia University Press.

The principal argument of this thesis is that Díaz's and Danticat's work is articulated through an extraterritorial language, which in turn, serves to re-evaluate the historical imbalances of the past and bring about new methods of identity creation that transcend their diasporas. As pertaining to the binomial approach of this thesis, the comparative method taken towards both authors' work highlights their similarities but also their points of divergence—*Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial* frequently contends that stories, especially those created in flux (in Díaz and Danticat's case in the asymmetrical space between the United States and Hispaniola), are unique by nature and every analysis should start from the richness of these idiosyncrasies.

Approaching concepts of fluidity and contemporary thought involves navigating in realms of volatile complexity, and the results of these findings often run the risk of resembling a mixture of loose threads that never coalesce into a sturdy patchwork. This introduction aims to function as a comprehensive map to offer the reader concrete orientation for the chapters that follow. It serves to sketch the outlines of the extraterritorial framework, to offer a look into the methodology used to build it, and to draft a review of the literature already available on this and related subjects. With that in mind, *Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial* is divided into three chapters with three different (though overlapping) topics: History, Language, and Identity. These topics will be exemplified by the work of Díaz and Danticat in several instances of their fiction, in the production of their books, and their resulting positioning as public figures in the contemporary literary world.

## **On Danticat and Díaz**

Any attempt to place Junot Díaz into a single category is bound to result in the over-simplification of a deeply complex author with an even more complex array of influences. As a Dominican immigrant who moved to New Jersey with his family aged six,<sup>9</sup> whose core writing language is English, and who now spends a substantial amount of his time as a lecturer in comparative media studies and writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the material place of his work would be fairly simple to define—his books would naturally belong in the section devoted to contemporary U.S. literary fiction; which is, indeed, where they are presently found in libraries, bookshops, and digital recommendation lists. However, a quick survey of bookshops in Latin America<sup>10</sup> sees his two short story collections and one novel often placed in the Latin American Fiction category, even though they are, in essence, interpreted works co-translated by external translators. Perhaps this is the first mark of an extraterritorial author: to be able to occupy diverse areas depending on the context, thus avoiding single labels and strict demarcation.

It could be argued that it is precisely the difficulty of placing Díaz within a single tradition that makes way for new, cross-disciplinary, approaches to his work: From an academic standpoint, the immediate reaction from label-driven criticism would be to place him under the banner of contemporary 'U.S. Latino' literature, itself a very fluid and contentious category which features writers with links to most Latin American

---

<sup>9</sup> A detailed biography can be found in Hanna, Harford Vargas, Saldívar, 2016, pp. 2-4.

<sup>10</sup> A personal quest over the last five years that included visits to bookshops, and found Díaz's books, in Mexico City, Puebla, Lima, Cusco, Buenos Aires and Panama City.

countries, who write in English, mostly about the experience of growing up between cultures. This list would presumably include the work of Díaz's contemporaries such as Daniel Alarcón, Francisco Goldman, Eduardo C. Corral, or Edwidge Danticat herself, but also the legacy paved by authors of older generations in the vein of Dagoberto Gilb, Julia Alvarez, Oscar Hijuelos, Sandra Cisneros and Piri Thomas (the latter being perhaps the closest reference to Díaz's narrative style and thematic preoccupations). Matters are further complicated if we choose to embrace the variety of literary and theoretical strands of direct correlation to Díaz—adding to the influence of 'Latino' authors, we could include works written in the Caribbean (in their Spanish, English and French threads),<sup>11</sup> authors from continental Latin America, and the numerous U.S. writers whose work is taught at the university courses Díaz himself took at Rutgers and Cornell, particularly the literary and political tradition of the many prisms related to the African American diaspora.

Instead of attempting the impossible task of categorising Díaz or predicting the exact extent of his future impact in literary history, *Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial* focuses on his published material to date—a more cohesive and condensed task given that Díaz is, self-admittedly, a slow writer. In a recent interview, he equated the success of his previous books to his disinclination towards producing new work:

It's strange to be the kind of writer who writes best when they're being ignored. I write best when everything in my life is completely quiet. The problem with having all this wonderful success is that when you're being applauded, nothing in your life is quiet. I have to wait for all of it to die down so that I can get back to the hard work of avoiding writing—which will eventually lead me to writing. [...]

---

<sup>11</sup> A cross-generational and transnational array of influences, often shared with Danticat, that include Derek Walcott, George Lamming, Wilson Harris, V.S. Naipul, Kamau Brathwaite, Aimé Césaire, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Alejo Carpentier.

I move so damn slow, if I were a colonial power, I'd be undone centuries ago. Nimble, I am not! (in Ganesan, 2017)

His current published material amounts to a single novel, two short story collections (*Drown*, released in 1996 and *This Is How You Lose Her* in 2012), an array of scattered short stories (the most recent being an excerpt from a now seemingly abandoned science fiction novel, 2012's *Mostro*) and an upcoming picture book aimed at children (*Islandborn*, which will be released in March, 2018).<sup>12</sup> Most of the critical plaudits and public attention, however, have been focused on his novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, which is extensively discussed in this thesis with examples extracted from different chapters. The most salient initial complications for any study of Díaz arise then not from dissecting his fictional output, but from the fact that Díaz's slowness as a fiction writer is rather incongruous with the vast amount of interviews and talks that are available online and from print outlets—a challenge, perhaps, that every study on a contemporary author must assume in these days of constant content creation and fast dissemination.

As befits a major contemporary author, academic work on Díaz has been relentless and expansive over the last ten years. When research for this thesis started being assembled in early 2014, the most salient academic texts on Díaz's work were only found in journals, literary magazines, and compilations. However, this changed in December 2015 with the publication of *Reading Junot Díaz* by Christopher González, which aimed to serve as a synthesis of the prevailing critical studies written up to that point, and was followed a week later by the more substantial tome *Junot Díaz and the*

---

<sup>12</sup> Nearly twenty years after Díaz first promised his then-infant goddaughters to 'write a book that featured characters like them, Dominican girls living in the Bronx.' (Alter, 2017)

*Decolonial Imagination*, a collection of academic essays edited by Monica Hanna, Jennifer Harford Vargas and José David Saldívar. This book, which features texts by renowned U.S.-based academics such as Glenda R. Carpio, Silvio Torres-Saillant, and Saldívar himself, marked an important point in the establishment of studies related to Díaz. Ordered in four sections,<sup>13</sup> the compilation acts as a cohesive examination of Díaz's 'decolonial imagination',<sup>14</sup> a term that has overlapping concerns with the extraterritorial and with this thesis,<sup>15</sup> aiming to create a dialogue between Díaz's work and theories of decolonisation from a variety of specialist scopes. However, there is still an enormous amount of uncollected output and the increasing rapidity with which academic texts on Díaz's work are becoming available evidences that, even if he stopped writing today, his output would continue to be a rich source for academic debates in years to come. The intention of this thesis is to add to these discussions by developing new readings of Díaz's fictional output, but it is important to reaffirm that its ultimate goal is not to limit itself to a close analysis of Díaz's corpus, but rather to display the relationship between his work and the theory of extraterritoriality, an approach which, to the best of my knowledge, has not yet been applied to his, or indeed Danticat's, writing.

---

<sup>13</sup> 'The place of Díaz's transamerican fiction and essays in twenty-first-century American literatures and cultures; the planetary forces animating his texts; his decolonial aesthetics and the concept of decolonial love; and the resurgent significance of race, Afro-Latinidad, gender, sexuality, ability, poverty, and the coloniality of power as analytic and experiential categories in his fiction and essays.' (Hanna et al., p. 17).

<sup>14</sup> An amalgamation of terms that includes theories such as Nelson Maldonado-Torres' 'decolonial turn', Aníbal Quijano's concepts of coloniality and Arjun Appadurai's 'work of the imagination' (Hanna et al., p. 3).

<sup>15</sup> Particularly Part II (Mapping Literary Geographies) and Part III (Doing Race In Spanglish), which focus on issues of language and history in Díaz's work that were being developed in this thesis in parallel to the book's publication.

In complete opposition to Díaz's measured publications stands Edwidge Danticat. Since her debut novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* in 1994, Danticat has produced a substantial, varied, and difficult-to-classify body of work, which features three more novels, three short story collections, three young adult novels, a travel book, a memoir, two essay collections, a picture book, and several edited anthologies. Reflecting on her proclivity for production, Danticat has stated:

I don't hold a candle to someone like Joyce Carol Oates and Stephen King or Walter Mosley in terms of productivity. But I still can't imagine taking a sabbatical. Writing is one of the few jobs from which very few people retire. And even when they say they retire, it seems like they're still doing writing-related work. Writing is like breathing to me. I would become a very miserable person if I weren't writing. Even if I stopped being published I would have to keep writing in order to function in any kind of normal and civil way in the world. (in Kat, 2013)

Her latest book, *The Art of Death*, released in 2017, is yet another text that defies the taxonomy of genre, combining personal recollections with other writers' texts on the subject of death—a leitmotif present in most of her fictional work. Keenly aware of the variety and prolificacy of Danticat's work, this thesis avoids covering too much ground for comfort, and focuses instead on selected excerpts from her short story collection *Krik? Krak!*, her first novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, her second novel *The Farming of Bones*, her loosely tied story collection *The Dew Breaker*, her collection of essays *Create Dangerously*, and her memoir *Brother, I'm Dying*. Much like that of Díaz's, all of Danticat's work has been written primarily in English, a language she learned after her relocation to Brooklyn as a twelve year old. Her condition as a speaker of French and Kreyòl makes placing Danticat into a single tradition an impossible task that would involve many of the classifications summarised above for Díaz, but unlike Díaz, her work is also highlighted as part of the corpus of female Caribbean literature



written in the United States (a lean catalogue that includes Paule Marshall, Angie Cruz, Zee Edgell, and Michelle Cliff).<sup>16</sup>

The publication of her fiction and non-fiction work has earned Danticat a vast array of accolades including the National Book Critics Circle Award, the MacArthur Genius Grant, and (perhaps more significantly in terms of mainstream acceptance) a sticker of approval from *O*, the Oprah Winfrey magazine. These awards should have made Danticat a world-renowned name, but even though it is increasingly evident that she holds a firm place in the United States' literary sphere, she is scarcely known outside of it. Her position as an ambassador for Haiti, however, has been decisively consecrated by the amount of journalistic articles, literary introductions and edited anthologies she has lent her name to, constantly sponsoring the dissemination and translation of classic Haitian authors such as Jacques Roumain, Jacques Stephen Alexis, and Marie Vieux-Chauvet and covering major events in contemporary Haiti with journalistic pieces for publications such as *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, and *The New York Times*. As with Díaz, Danticat's writing has been a rich source of analysis for literary critics and academics; however, texts on Danticat's work are still mostly dispersed through journals and magazines. 2010's *Edwidge Danticat: A Reader's Guide* edited by Martin Munro remains the only volume of academic studies solely devoted to examining her books, presenting an assorted array of outlooks in fourteen essays,<sup>17</sup> including a whole section devoted to the difficulties of placing Danticat and her work

---

<sup>16</sup> An extended biography of Danticat can be found in Martin Munro's essay 'Inside Out: A Brief Biography of Edwidge Danticat' (Munro, 2010), pp. 13-26.

<sup>17</sup> Particularly pertinent were Mary Gallagher's 'Concealment, Displacement, and Disconnection: Danticat's *The Dew Breaker*' and Mireille Rosello's 'Violence, Nation, and Memory: Danticat's *The Farming of Bones*' both essays dedicated to the texts analysed in this thesis.

into a determined milieu—one of the igniting questions of the present thesis' first chapter.

## **On History**

The first chapter of *Reconfiguring The Extraterritorial* aims to place the work of Danticat and Díaz into the context of their island of birth and its direct relationship to their place of residence. The history of Hispaniola represents an inspiring foundation for extraterritorial discourses. Not only is it a fertile basis for discussions related to language and culture, but the proximity of the island to its northern neighbour means that, for the Haitian or the Dominican diaspora, exile is never truly possible, at least not for two known writers such as Danticat and Díaz, who were born in Port-au-Prince and Santo Domingo respectively, grew up in Brooklyn and New Jersey, but have travelled back and forth between the island and the continent frequently. Their literature often serves as a reflection of that invisible bridge, not only between cultures, but also between historical and political processes, which, due to their many incongruences and inequalities, have often remained unresolved.

Most of the evidence on the early history of Hispaniola and the pre-Columbian settlements of Taíno tribes in this thesis was derived from findings in Irving Rouse's book *The Tainos: Rise and Decline of the People Who Greeted Columbus*, although early reports, such as 1542's travelogue *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* by Bartolomé de las Casas were also used. Books on Haitian history often overlap with those on Dominican history, though due to the sheer broadness of literature available on the Haitian Revolution (as opposed to the scarcity of work written about pre-Trujillo

Dominican Republic) the balance of my research leans heavily towards the former. A solid introduction to the core topics of Haitian history can be found in Patrick Bellegarde-Smith's *Haiti: The Breached Citadel*—a thorough historical review that aims to connect the dots between the early colonisation processes and contemporary Haiti, including the events that led to and followed from the Haitian Revolution. Historiographical readings on Haiti frequently use the Haitian Revolution as an axis to discuss what happened before and since, almost always questioning the event's undervaluation on the larger canvas of world history.<sup>18</sup> A brief overview of the core personalities and themes of the revolution can be found in Jeremy D. Popkin's *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution*, a study which also attempts to synthesise three strands of scholarship (Haitian, North American, and French) up to the year 2011. More recent books, such as Phillippe Girard's *The Slaves Who Defeated Napoleon: Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian War of Independence, 1801-1804* and Laurent Dubois' *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* feature added archival analysis and aim to refine inaccuracies found in previous studies—these were all used extensively to contour the history of Hispaniola in the first chapter.

C.L.R. James' 1938 book *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* remains the most accessible and widely read introduction to the revolutionary years—a work so alluring and fundamental that it has spawned several studies on the book itself, some of which were collected in 2017 by Charles Forsdick and Christian Høgsbjerg in *The Black Jacobins Reader*. Although *The Black Jacobins* and

---

<sup>18</sup> David P. Geggus' *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* and Nick Nesbitt's *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment* are two examples of studies based on the re-evaluation of the Haitian Revolution's significance on the global stage, and the reasons of its evident obscuration.

its resulting analyses do present a multileveled view of the Haitian Revolution and help sketch the context for this chapter, one of the aims of *Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial*, following the approach taken by Díaz and Danticat in their fiction, is to shift the focus from the grand figures to common men and women. In this sense, this thesis is more related to the approach followed by Carolyn E. Fick in her 1990 book *The Making of Haiti: The Saint-Domingue Revolution From Below*, a study that sought to highlight the influence of organised groups of slave rebels which, according to her findings, were as fundamental to the triumph of the revolution as major figures such as Louverture, Christophe, or Dessalines were.

The relevance of the Haitian Revolution not merely to the history of Hispaniola, but as an event from which Eurocentric concepts of modernity can be challenged, has been discussed by Sybille Fisher in *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Culture of Slavery at the Age of Revolution* and by Susan Buck-Morss in *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*—these studies represent examples of the recent trend of the decolonisation of history and therefore fall in line with other discussions of decoloniality found in Díaz's and Danticat's work and in all three chapters of this thesis. Expanding further on the Caribbean connections of the Haitian Revolution, Ada Ferrer's 2014 study *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* serves to place the event into the context of the region as a whole, showing the radical possibilities opened to other neighbouring countries with similar historical paths, while Gerald Horne's *Confronting Black Jacobins: The United States, the Haitian Revolution, and the Origins of the Dominican Republic* is a recent work, also heavily influenced by C.L.R. James, that serves to strengthen the nexus between the Haitian Revolution and the U.S. Civil War, and outline the early origins of the current iteration of the Dominican Republic.

Much as the Haitian Revolution represents a touchstone of historiographical works on Haiti, the years of Rafael Trujillo's military dictatorship are an omnipresent subject of 20<sup>th</sup>-century studies on the Dominican side of the island. Bernard Diederich's *Trujillo: Death of a Dictator* functions as a solid factual basis of the dictator's infamy whilst Ignacio López-Calvo's *God and Trujillo* is a thorough review that questions the myth-creating processes perpetuated by literary representations of the dictatorship and Trujillo himself, and as such, the book played an important role in establishing the connections between history and narrative creation in this thesis. Likewise, Lauren H. Derby's *The Dictator's Seduction: Politics and the Popular Imagination in the Era of Trujillo* offers concrete examples on Trujillo's usage of 'vernacular politics' and the appropriation of common popular narratives of masculinity, race and class mobility to aid his self-performed myth creation. James Ferguson's *Dominican Republic: Beyond the Lighthouse* served to contour the myriad accounts of inequality in the island's economic system, the exploitative use of Haitian workers that helped to sustain it, and the abstruse role of the United States as a distant overseer. This relationship is further expanded in *The Dominican Republic and the United States: From Imperialism to Transnationalism* by G. Pope Atkins and Larman Wilson, an in-depth look at the interplay between both countries since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, a subject which is similarly discussed from a Haitian perspective in Mary Renda's *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*. Following the thread of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Haitian history, Elizabeth Abbott's *Haiti: The Duvaliers and Their Legacy* and Amy Wilentz's *The Rainy Reason, Haiti – Then and Now* are both valuable accounts released in the late 1980s that summarise the regime of the Duvaliers and the

immediate consequences of their dictatorship—an all-pervading presence in Danticat's *Krik? Krak!*, *The Dew Breaker* and *Brother, I'm Dying*.

As has been stated above, studies based on Haitian history and Dominican history are almost inevitably intertwined—however, there are books that knowingly derive their outline from a comparative approach, exemplifying the direct, on the ground, interactions between Haitians and Dominicans (as perpetuated by their respective governments). Ernesto Sagás' *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic* is a vital work that throws light upon the roots of *antihaitianismo*—a racist method of exclusion based upon an imaginary vision of whiteness propagated by the Dominican establishment from the very construction of the nation up until the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Dominican constructs of race and its negation of blackness from the early establishments of the colony are well documented in Silvio Torres-Saillant's *Introduction to Dominican Blackness*, while James Ferguson's 2004 report *Migration in the Caribbean: Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Beyond* presents a more specific view on the inequalities of migrant labour in the Dominican Republic often directly related to these conceptions of race. Maria Cristina Fumagalli's *On the Edge: Writing the Border Between Haiti and the Dominican Republic* looks at these divisions from a historical perspective using an extensive range of cultural examples from writers close to Hispaniola (including Díaz's 'Mostro' and Danticat's *The Farming of Bones*) and placing them in dialogue with texts from other parts of the world. Its importance to this thesis, however, is in its thorough historical definition of the border that delineates Haiti and the Dominican Republic both as a tangible boundary and as a metaphor. A more recent study of the racialisation of narratives from the Dominican perspective in order to sustain the borders of segregation both at home and in the diasporas can be found in

*The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction* by Lorgia García-Peña. The commodities that shaped the economy in both sides of the island also serve as an interesting starting point when looking at the disparity of economic processes. In this sense, Elizabeth Abbott's *Sugar: A Bittersweet History*, James Walvin's recent study *Sugar: The World Corrupted, from Slavery to Obesity*, and Myriam J.A. Chancy's *From Sugar to Revolution: Women's Visions of Haiti, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic* all provide room for a broader comparative approach between the economic history of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and the rest of the world.

In terms of its theoretical framework, *Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial* places an emphasis on the scope of both Díaz and Danticat in dealing with major events from the point of view of common people, rather than focusing on distant (though ubiquitous) major figures. Two works of fiction in which Trujillo's dictatorship directly influences the main characters—Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* and Danticat's *The Farming of Bones*—are placed alongside the historiographical work associated with the *Annales* School,<sup>19</sup> specifically Fernand Braudel's theory of *longue durée*.<sup>20</sup> Díaz's and Danticat's knowing references to the silencing of history and the empty lacunae of information this begets are then related to Hayden White's essay 'Guilty of History' (and, consequently, the influence of Paul Ricoeur's study *Memory, History, Forgetting*) and his questioning of the relationship between historiography, memory, forgetfulness, and narrative. Following this path, Michel De Certeau's *The Writing of History*, is employed due to its critique of Eurocentric colonial scopes of history creation, a theme that features heavily in Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the*

---

<sup>19</sup> A group of French historians named after the *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* journal, founded in 1929 by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch.

<sup>20</sup> Discussed in detail in Chapter I, p. 48.

*Past*—a fundamental study that greatly influenced this thesis, which acts as a vital link between the politics of silence and the specific example of the Haitian Revolution. Likewise, the work of Édouard Glissant on the Caribbean, most notably his book of essays *Caribbean Discourse* and his paper ‘Creolization in the Making of the Americas’ serve to contour Díaz’s and Danticat’s fiction in the context of the region, as does Antonio Benítez-Rojo’s major study of the inherent incompleteness of Caribbean identities, *The Repeating Island*. These perspectives are ultimately tied in with Immanuel Wallerstein’s economic theory of World Systems, to discuss issues of agency and positioning in cultural transactions between what Wallerstein termed periphery (in this case the Caribbean) and Core regions.<sup>21</sup>

## **On Language**

The chapter on language functions as the central segment of the thesis, reassessing the concept of extraterritoriality with a review of Steiner’s reflections on language and their standing in relation to the rest of his academic work, specifically his collections *Extraterritorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution* and *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman*. It is imperative to note now that the approach found in the second chapter of this thesis is not driven by a close grammatical analysis of Díaz’s or Danticat’s phrase construction, but rather, attempts to act as a review of their differing approaches, explorations and limitations in their usage of language with examples from *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*,

---

<sup>21</sup> The term ‘periphery’, which Wallerstein uses to refer to countries with less developed economies, will be written in lowercase; while the term Core, used to denote the industrialised nations that control the international capital market will be capitalised and also employed when referring to established Indo-European languages (in the case of this thesis, the Core languages discussed are Spanish, English, and French).



*Brother, I'm Dying* and assorted interviews with both authors, from four distinct approaches: interlingual and intralingual; linguistic decolonisation; communicative and symbolic language; and domestication versus foreignisation.

The second chapter deals with the notion of Díaz and Danticat (and their characters) as translators, referencing Lawrence Venuti's theories of domestication and foreignisation and Roman Jakobson's triptych of intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic language. The issue of translation allows for a discussion of the incongruences between extraterritorial literature and what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari termed 'minor' or 'deterritorialised' literature in their study *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* and their seminal book *A Thousand Plateaus*. This chapter also follows the debate of linguistic decolonisation, positing the use of language employed by Díaz and Danticat as a method of discursive resistance. Departing from Jacques Derrida's *Monolingualism of the Other or The Prosthesis of Origin* and its questioning of what it means to *use* or *own* a language, this thesis equates Díaz's and Danticat's linguistic conceptions to that of their shared influence Toni Morrison, and her poetic interpretation of the political properties of language as expressed in her Nobel Prize speech and her book *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Further issues of linguistic ownership and political articulation are contrasted with the theory of complete disaffiliation proposed by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in *Decolonising the Mind*, which begets a discussion <sup>22</sup> of the relationship between theories of postcolonialism in literature and the places of elocution for said language, inevitably leading to Homi Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* and *The Location of Culture* to discuss

---

<sup>22</sup> Related to Frantz Fanon and W.E.B. Du Bois' theories of double consciousness and their constant questioning of colonial linguistic codes and hegemony, which are discussed in Chapter II, p. 132.

his theories of cultural difference and his notion of the 'third space', which is subsequently related to Mary Louise Pratt's concept of 'contact zones' (first posited in *Imperial Eyes*) to refer to those spaces where 'cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they [are] lived out in many parts of the world today' (1991: 34). This in turn leads to debating the theory of what Wallerstein and Aníbal Quijano named 'Americanity' (in their essay 'Americanity as a concept, or the Americas in the modern world-system'), or the idea of how to create work transcending the dividing lines found within the continent without ignoring the significant imbalance of power between regions. The reactions to the concept of 'Americanity' in this thesis are primarily based on the work of Walter D. Mignolo, whose book *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* and its resulting theories of 'border-thinking' and decolonisation, are referenced throughout all three chapters.

## **On Identity**

Regarding identity, the final chapter develops its definitions of diaspora from the basis of Brent Hayes Edwards' *The Practice of Diaspora Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*—a text which synthesises previous definitions of the term and challenges the delineations posited by Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic*.<sup>23</sup> These discussions on the collective and individual construction of identity within and outside of the parameters of diaspora are subsequently exemplified by Danticat's novel

---

<sup>23</sup> Owing a significant debt to the sociological work of James Clifford in *Diasporas* and Khachig Tölölyan's *Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment*.)

*The Dew Breaker* and a selection of Díaz's and Danticat's short stories—including Danticat's 'Caroline's Wedding' and 'New York Day Women' and Díaz's 'Drown' and 'How To Date A Brown Girl (black girl, white girl or halfie)'. The examples from Díaz's and Danticat's work serve to sketch the notion of their characters as sociological commentators with similar methods to those articulated by Pierre Bourdieu in his theories of self-reflexivity and, more broadly speaking, Díaz's and Danticat's parallels to the approach taken by Stuart Hall in his use of the term 'difference' when referring to the construction and representation of individual identities within the bounds of a larger diaspora and its potential resolution in political action.

Elena Machado Sáez's *Market Aesthetics: The Purchase of the Past in Caribbean Diasporic Fiction* served as a helpful bridge between theory and practice due to its inclusion of analyses of the work of both Díaz and Danticat and the public reception of their books in the context of multicultural literature as a marketing tool. Closely connected to the specific case study of migrants in the United States, Gloria Anzaldúa's now-classic book of essays *Borderlands/La Frontera* played a tacit but vital role in shaping this chapter's conceptions of the parallels between identity creation and political performance. Similarly, Lucía M. Suarez's study of both Hispaniolan diasporas in the United States, *The Tears of Hispaniola: Haitian and Dominican Diaspora Memory*, which also uses examples from Díaz and Danticat alongside work by Jean-Robert Cadet and Loida Maritza Pérez, proved a fecund source of reference to establish the links between the authors and their respective diasporas and the suggestion of a larger U.S.-Caribbean community. Other texts consulted, though not directly referenced, include Amy Kaplan's *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, a study that helps discern how U.S. foreign relations have shaped the contemporary conception of

diasporas and national identity as a whole in the United States and Chris Bongie's *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature*, which served as a resource for the historical examples of literary hybridity in and outside of the Caribbean.

A general introduction to the relationship between social structures in the Caribbean and literature can be found in Raphael Dalleo's *Caribbean Literature and the Public Sphere: From the Plantation to the Postcolonial*—a thorough investigation drawing from an array of anglophone, francophone and hispanophone literary examples, while more canonical works such as Kamau Brathwaite's *History of the Voice: Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry*, Simon Gikandi's *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature*, and Silvio Torres-Saillant's *An Intellectual History of the Caribbean* are not directly discussed, yet exerted an overall influence on the construction of this chapter when placing Díaz and Danticat in their historical context. Likewise, Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* is not directly engaged, yet it played an influence in this thesis's conception of the contrasting relationship between African-American vernacular literature and Eurocentric post-structuralist theory in the United States. In terms of contemporary studies of race and diaspora, collections of essays such as Kamari Maxine Clarke and Deborah A. Thomas' *Globalization and Race: Transformations in the Cultural Production of Blackness* and Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel's *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* draw from a variety of international examples to examine the complicated influence of African-American identity within the black diaspora in other parts of the world—and it could serve as a platform to hypothesise on the future influence of Díaz and Danticat outside of the American

continent. The collection *Identity in Question* (edited by Anthony Elliott and Paul du Gay, especially Zygmunt Bauman's essay 'Identity in a Globalizing World') and Iain Chambers' cross-disciplinary study *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* also played a role in adding context to issues of 'identity discourse' discussed in this chapter.

## **Migration and Theory**

Although the basis of *Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial* is multi-disciplinary, its development and conclusions are closely related to comparative literature—itsself a practice in flux, with a blurred present and an uncertain future (which has been uncertain for at least twenty years by now). Works by major figures working in this field have, in the past two and a half decades, tended to a turn towards issues of decolonisation and a reassessment of the myriad interpretations of the 'world literature' tag, featuring titles heavy on dramatic statements and pragmatic conclusions. Texts consulted for this thesis included David Damrosch's *What Is World Literature?*—A broad historical review drawing from a vast array of temporal spaces that challenged Eurocentric conceptions of literature and a key study for sketching a timeline that debunks 'world literature' as a canonical category; *Debating World Literature*, a collection of essays edited by Christopher Prendergast that features essays by Benedict Anderson, Elisa Sampson and Franco Moretti and serves as a wide-ranging outlook of the conceptions and polemics surrounding terminology in literary studies; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *Death of a Discipline*, which argued for a reconfiguration of comparative literature both from an epistemological standpoint and from a practical stance, with a staunchly multilingual and extra-hemispheric approach to how these subjects should be taught in class; and two of Emily Apter's studies: *Continental Drift*

and *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*, both of which observe the inherent incompleteness of a method of classification that includes texts that cannot wholly participate in a like-for-like exchange due to the imbalances of translation. Following that multidisciplinary approach, Claire Kramsch's *Language and Culture* served to chart the social changes that influenced recent studies such as Rebecca L. Walkowitz's *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature*—an innovative look at the new wave of multilingual, cross-cultural authors and the initial complications that arise in the analysis of their work. All these studies helped to position extraterritorial literature in the context of current debates, reaffirming the complexity of (and the lack of academic studies on) the work of writers whose language acts as its own translation, resulting in the questioning of their place in the study of contemporary comparative literature as a practice—an issue that will be extensively discussed in the epilogue of this thesis.

Referenced in the first two chapters, Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* relies on the theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu to sketch a global vision of the hierarchies of power found within transnational acts of translation and their resulting consumption in dominant markets—and, as such, served as an inspiration to question the material positioning of Díaz and Danticat not from a purely literary point of view, but from the stages that follow the publication of their books, when their work becomes, due to its close affiliation to the English language, part of a larger network of transnational hegemony.<sup>24</sup> Preceding Casanova's work, Edward Said's collection of essays *Culture and Imperialism* (from which the title essay that was briefly discussed earlier on this introduction was extracted) was one of the main inspirations in the

---

<sup>24</sup> This is briefly discussed in Chapter I, p. 89 and, more extensively, in the Epilogue.

embryonic stages of *Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial* due to its astute analysis of migratory movements in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and Said's personal quest to connect the dots between culture and politics to clarify the uneven narratives perpetuated by imperialist viewpoints.

In the specific case of the American continent, discussions of transnational literature have been raised by studies such as Gustavo Pérez Firmat's edited compilation *Do The Americas Have A Common Literature?* which attempted to find commonalities between works of fiction from different zones of the continent, a notion further explored by José David Saldívar in *Trans-Americanity: Subaltern Modernities, Global Coloniality, and the Cultures of Greater Mexico*, which expands upon Quijano and Wallerstein's concept of Americanity to propose a postcolonial critique of the practice of 'American studies', one that includes the world-systems theory and constantly reminds us of the inequalities still prevalent in the region. Another proposal of the expansion of American studies can be found in Paul Giles' *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary*, a study that argues that the national identity of several canonical works of U.S. literature are deeply linked to work constructed outside of the geographical boundaries of the country (acting almost as a counter argument to Díaz's and Danticat's work conversely influencing U.S. literature), while David Cowart's *Trailing Clouds: Immigrant Fiction in Contemporary America* provides close readings of selected works by migrant writers in the U.S. (including Edwidge Danticat) from the period of 1970 to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Further away from the American region, but nonetheless fundamental to draw connections between different contexts is Yasemin Yildiz's study of the diverse forms of multilingualism in German literary history *The Postmonolingual Condition: Beyond the Mother Tongue*—a

thorough review that transcends its original scope of linguistics and proved a valuable resource for analysing (and challenging) the connections between language, literature, and nation.

Loosely related to literature, studies such as Nikos Papastergiadis' *The Turbulence of Migration*, served as a cohesive entry point to academic work on issues of hybridity and deterritorialisation during the last years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the direct consequences of public policy in matters of migration. James Clifford's trilogy *The Predicament of Culture, Routes, and Returns* which neatly presents the strained relationship between globalisation and decolonisation from a variety of approaches (including essays, poetry and travel writings), also proved a source of inspiration for its varied insight and accessible style. Theories of globalisation and the politics of locality were drawn from the work of Arjun Appadurai in *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* and reassessed from a Latin American perspective by Nestor García Canclini's *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson's *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor* was employed to place many of these concepts on the global scale and draw a comparative approach from a variety of examples of borderlands around the world.

Lastly, the influence of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* on this thesis deserves a special mention, playing the role of catalyst for many of the thematic concerns that are discussed through all three chapters. *Imagined Communities* and Anderson's corpus as a whole is central to understanding several of the vicissitudes that continue to shape our contemporary societies, and as such, his cross-disciplinary approach to the complex notion of the crafting of nationalities is at the core of this



thesis' conception of the extraterritorial and the general approach of thinking without borders.

## **The Margins of Time**

*Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial* was elaborated between early 2014 and late 2017, which seems, in the grand scheme of history, like a brief period, albeit a highly accelerated one. Some, if not most of, the issues raised in this thesis—from migration to nationalism and the politics of identity—have occupied an increasingly preponderant space in the public sphere, shaping governmental policies around the world and influencing the construction and destruction of movements directly related to the acceptance or rejection of transnational connections from a wide range of changeable ideologies. Considering the rapid, often erratic, swings of the political pendulums in play, one of the guiding principles of this thesis has been kept constant: namely, to observe not merely the way in which distinctive events shape extraterritorial literature, but to keep in mind the long term patterns that can be discerned through the analysis of the work accomplished by authors who employ an extraterritorial language.

This thesis, however, does not exist in isolation from the time in which it was created. Even when taking into account the context that made the existence of *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* or *The Dew Breaker* possible, it is imperative to note that the very specific case of Danticat and Díaz working under their current condition as U.S. citizens (and all the advantages that entails) would have been a far more tortuous process had their families emigrated under today's hostile political

circumstances.<sup>25</sup> The rescinding of programmes such as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)—a policy that allowed children of undocumented migrants to be eligible for work permits in the United States<sup>26</sup>—are shaping the public narrative of a country where migration has always played a multileveled and imbalanced influence on its history and its economy. Although this thesis and the works it analyses constantly remind us of the limitations and hindrances faced by Haitian and Dominican migrants throughout history, these policies and the antagonistic public discourse they generate serve to further evidence the biases through which inequality is harnessed, expanded, and solidified.

In 2014, when this thesis was still in its early stages, Haitian and Dominican relations were at a low point. The approval of Sentencia TC 0168-13 by the Dominican congress in 2013 made systematic state exclusion a reality. According to the ruling, retroactive to 1929, an estimated 200,000 Dominicans born to undocumented parents would have their citizenships invalidated, rendering them stateless instantly. The vast majority of individuals affected by this ruling were Dominicans of Haitian descent, some of whom do not speak a word of Kreyòl or French, who would not be able to exercise their full rights, get married, open bank accounts or even leave a country that

---

<sup>25</sup> In the specific case of Haitian migrants, these methods of exclusion were made public policy in November 2017 with the end of temporary protected status (TPS) for approximately 59,000 Haitian nationals who sought refuge in the United States after the major earthquake of 2010. This policy forces TPS recipients to either achieve legal status (an increasingly daunting task), return to Haiti by July 2019, or risk deportation. See: Ruiz-Grossman, 2017. 'Trump Administration Is Sending Haitians Back To A Country Still Mired In Disaster'. *Huffington Post* [online]. Available at: [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/haiti-tps-protections\\_us\\_5a14b33ce4b09650540e1bdb](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/haiti-tps-protections_us_5a14b33ce4b09650540e1bdb) [last accessed 25/12/2017].

<sup>26</sup> The stories of undocumented children that could potentially be affected by the dissolution of these policies have been collected by Valeria Luiselli in her recent book *Tell Me How It Ends*—a compilation of translated testaments by children of Latin American descent facing deportation from the United States.

legally does not want them. The edict was criticised in an open letter to *The New York Times* by Danticat, Díaz and fellow authors Julia Alvarez and Mark Kurlansky<sup>27</sup>—a statement that eventually resulted in the Dominican government stripping Díaz of the order of merit award, and considering him *persona non grata* until present time (late 2017).<sup>28</sup> In May 2014, the Dominican legislature passed Naturalization Law 169-14, a deceptive decree that would purportedly be the first path towards citizenship but was rejected by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights as insufficient. As a result of the controversy, the Dominican Republic government withdrew the country from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, a move which allowed them to continue their project of marginalisation unashamedly and legally according to their national law. As of 2017, after a plethora of thorough reports from organisations such as the IACHR<sup>29</sup> and Human Rights Watch,<sup>30</sup> the Dominican government has, at least nominally,

---

<sup>27</sup> Alvarez, J., et al. (2013) 'Two Versions of a Dominican Tale'. *The New York Times* [online]. Available at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/01/opinion/two-versions-of-a-dominican-tale.html>> [last accessed 02/03/2015].

<sup>28</sup> Walters, J. (2015) Author Junot Díaz called unpatriotic as Dominican Republic strips him of award. *The Guardian* [online]. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/oct/25/junot-diaz-author-dominican-republic-haiti-immigration>> [last accessed 02/03/2016].

<sup>29</sup> Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 2016. 'Denationalization and Statelessness in the Dominican Republic'. [report] Available through: <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/multimedia/2016/DominicanRepublic/dominican-republic.html> [Last accessed 25/12/2017].

<sup>30</sup> Human Rights Watch, 2015. We Are Dominican Arbitrary Deprivation of Nationality in the Dominican Republic <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/07/01/we-are-dominican/arbitrary-deprivation-nationality-dominican-republic>

taken advice on board;<sup>31</sup> however, they are yet to legally revert their decrees, leaving many eligible people still unable to resolve their status.<sup>32</sup>

As evidenced by these contemporary cases of injustice, the status of belonging to a particular nation is no longer merely an imagined concept. It has direct consequences on the lives of humans whose voices are marginalised and whose basic rights are negated due to the lottery of nationality—which, in the case of Sentencia TC 0168-13, is not even related to their place of birth. Deferential to the struggles of reality, any conception of literature as post-national or cosmopolitan must first ask if these ideals can be equitably attained or restricted only to those with the right passport. The driving force of *Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial* aims to highlight the patterns of inequality that nomenclature and division beget, and as such, it constantly asks whether literature and theory can eventually resolve into political action. As Stuart Hall reflected:

Against the urgency of people dying in the streets, what in God's name is the point of cultural studies? [...] At that point, I think anybody who is into cultural studies seriously as an intellectual practice, must feel, on their pulse, its ephemerality, its insubstantiality, how little it registers, how little we've been able to change anything or get anybody to do anything. If you don't feel that as one tension in the work that you are doing, theory has let you off the hook. (in Jeffries, 2014)

One of the arguments of this thesis is that the elocution of extraterritorial language itself counts as a method of progression towards a transcendent goal, which

---

<sup>31</sup> Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 2017. 'IACHR Welcomes Willingness of Dominican Republic to Comply with Recommendations. [Press release] Available online at: <[http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media\\_center/preleases/2017/087.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/preleases/2017/087.asp)> [Last accessed 25 December 2017].

<sup>32</sup> Cervantes, 2017, 'Stateless People, Undocumented Immigrants Face Uncertainty In The Dominican Republic ' <https://kjzz.org/content/458539/stateless-people-undocumented-immigrants-face-uncertainty-dominican-republic> [Last accessed 28 December 2017]

starts with the recognition of past and present wrongs and subsequently devolves into the will to reconfigure them. As Toni Morrison said, language does not ‘live up to life once and for all’, but draws most of its force from the ‘reach towards the ineffable’ (1993). This work can only be achieved from the margins, with a language that does not fall in line with preconceived models but that, instead, reflects its fluctuating condition by not remaining still. In Díaz’s and Danticat’s case, their depiction of the multi-tiered richness of migrant experiences and the search for the viewpoints hidden within the silenced paths of history is part of an intersectional approach that must always include the broadest array of perspectives. This can eventually devolve in pockets of resistance against grand narratives—be they official discourses perpetuated by authoritarian regimes or simplistic canons designed and reinforced to exclude points of view that do not correspond to established ways of thinking. The analysis of how these methods of challenge can be articulated is the ultimate goal of *Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial*.

## Chapter I: History

‘The only philosophy which can be responsibly  
practiced in face of despair is the attempt to contemplate  
all things from the standpoint of redemption [...] Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange  
the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as  
indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the  
messianic light.’

Theodor W. Adorno (*Minima Moralia*, 247)

### People's Instinctive Travels and The Silenced Paths of History

When the physical aspect of travel is done, all there is left are chronicles. Stories that can range from the mundane to the heroic are an essential part of travel, and the act of migration, above all forms of mobility, epitomises its narrative qualities. Unlike a daily commute where routine will homogenise the days into a linear, repetitive pattern, migratory stories are tales of urgency and transformation. Behind migration there is always a definitive reason—in today’s world, more often than not, related to capital or political persecution—and the reason carries a story, always particular, that must be articulated and repeated to family, neighbours, officers, landlords and employers in diverse circumstances and multiple registers. Yet, every story is always dependent on another narrative: a collective history grander than the individual. This chapter will not deal with the immigrant as a victim of consequence, nor with the immigrant as merely an agent of history. Instead, what will be tested, using the work of Edwidge Danticat and Junot Díaz, is the role of immigrants, in this case extraterritorial authors and their fictional characters, as historians—individuals using dotted accounts and frayed

memories to unknot the yarn inherited from their ancestors: a contentious history of varied interpretations that has been continuously manipulated and obscured by official entities and policy-makers.

Any approach to understanding the characters in both Díaz's and Danticat's output should start by examining the historical context that allowed their work to exist. This chapter will begin by outlining some of the key events that shaped the history of Hispaniola, and consequently, the work of Díaz and Danticat. The history of Haiti and the Dominican Republic is ever present in their novels and short stories, and so is the relationship between their place of birth and the United States, where they both now reside; but the perspectives through which history is portrayed are not necessarily focused on precise facts and figures. Their books show an evident familiarity with the significant events and major characters that shaped the official history of Hispaniola—battles, massacres and political leaders are present even if tacitly—yet, unlike the work of other authors who have attempted to make these major figures the focal point of their fiction,<sup>33</sup> Danticat and Díaz place their attention firmly on the resulting effects these figures and their policies have had in the lives of common men and women. Both authors see the creation of history as an intimate dialogue between generations, and they both acknowledge the contribution of individuals to the construction of a collective memory. In that sense, the recurrence of depicting families on both sides of the water serves not only as a perspective-switching narrative device, but also a

---

<sup>33</sup> Curiously enough, the most renowned examples are often novels written by authors not born in Hispaniola, see: Mario Vargas Llosa's *La fiesta del chivo* centering on Rafael Trujillo, and Alejo Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo* with the presence of Henri Christophe as a major character.

chronicling method that turns Danticat, Díaz, and their characters into historians of a cross-generational vein, always close to the Braudelian theory of *longue durée*.

Carrying on from the studies of Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, Fernand Braudel, one of the major academics behind the *Annales* journal and school of historians, proposed that the lens of history should not only be focused on major figures or events—instead, history should be studied in the long term, by examining the lives and struggles of everyday people. In his seminal study *The Mediterranean*, Braudel remarks that historiographic production up to the second half of the twentieth century had almost always derived from the literate wealthy classes,<sup>34</sup> who, in turn, exalted the achievements of individuals in positions of power. Braudel emphasised the importance of capital in the shaping of history, but did it through examining the lives of the producers, focusing on the marginal stories of peasants, slaves, and economic immigrants, reinterpreting their role in the shaping of key events and showing their vital contribution to history making processes.<sup>35</sup>

The issue of a multiplicity of concurrent histories, one very much linked both to migratory configurations and the history of Hispaniola, is articulated by Braudel on three levels: The first concerns the slow passing of time in the environment, with its

---

<sup>34</sup> For more on the elitism of historiography and Braudel's point of view on the matter, see the introduction (p. 9) of *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, edited by Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (1991).

<sup>35</sup> A prosopographical approach (that is to say: focusing on the collective studies of individual, often untraceable, biographies) refined throughout his bibliography with a plethora of examples, but truly crystalised in his 1969 book *Ecrits sur l'Histoire*, translated to English eleven years later and published as *On History*.



indomitable, cyclical and almost unnoticeable variations.<sup>36</sup> The second focuses on the *longue durée* patterns of social groupings and civilisations, specifically economic and cultural changes. The third, for Braudel the least important (yet most widely covered by historiography), is that of events, politics, and individuals with memorable names—an accessible method of studying and teaching history, but one which, according to Braudel, is inevitably superficial and deceptive.<sup>37</sup>

### **A brief history of Hispaniola.**

Adapting this method of tri-linear history to the island of Hispaniola, particularly to its origins, would unavoidably be an incomplete task plagued with absences. We know, through the work of historians from Bartolomé de las Casas<sup>38</sup> to Irving Rouse, that Hispaniola was originally inhabited by Taíno tribes, themselves descendants of immigrants from South America.<sup>39</sup> We know these tribes had called the Western part of the island Ayiti<sup>40</sup> ('the land of high mountains', in Arawak language), though they also

---

<sup>36</sup> The latter point showing clearly that he first postulated this idea in 1949, decades before climate change made these changes all too evident in public discourse.

<sup>37</sup> The core of this thesis, delivered in his famous nautical allegories, can first be found in *A History of Civilizations* (p. 34-35), but Braudel constantly references these three levels throughout the book, and indeed, in the rest of his work.

<sup>38</sup> Before becoming a priest, De las Casas initially participated in raids and invasions against the native Taíno population, and even owned slaves in the Cibao area of Hispaniola. It took him thirteen years and experiencing the conquest of Cuba first hand to reflect upon the cruel practices of colonialism and become the proto-human rights activist he is now remembered as. See: Parish, H.R. and Wagner R.S. (1967).

<sup>39</sup> Irving Rouse, in his book *The Tainos: Rise and Decline of the People Who Greeted Columbus*, presents two theories, rooting the Taíno beginnings to either the Amazon Basin (through the Orinoco valley) or the Colombian Andes—nevertheless, both theories point to South America as their origin. The name Taíno allegedly stems from the tribe's own demarcation from other ethnic groups: 'meaning "good" or "noble," because several of its members spoke that word to Columbus to indicate that they were not Island-Caribs' (Alegria in Rouse, 1993: 5)

<sup>40</sup> The choosing of 'Ayiti' as the preferred name after the triumph of the Haitian Revolution was a quite conscious decision, as Laurent Dubois wrote in *Haiti: The*

allegedly referred to it as Quisqueya.<sup>41</sup> We also know the island was divided into clear-cut chiefdoms with intricate rivalries and alliances which were often dependent on inter-chiefdom marriage and the threat of invading tribes from other parts of the Caribbean.<sup>42</sup> This information would fit into Braudel's second level, yet the absence of written legacy from the Taínos means that all mainstream historical articulation of Hispaniola begins with the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492, and by naming him we immediately enter Braudel's third level of historical creation—the one imposed by colonialism and developed through the years to delineate the narrative construction of Hispaniola as a notion revolving around political leaders and their respective epochs. However, as Braudel argues in his other great study *On History*: 'Nothing is more important, nothing comes closer to the crux of social reality than this living, intimate, infinitely repeated opposition between the instant of time and that time which flows only slowly' (1985: 26). This conflict of chronologies and the clash of the transient and the perennial would eventually become a leitmotif in Haitian and Dominican history (and arguably, in every country that has experienced similar processes of colonialism). The Spanish colonisers, through the practice of *mestizaje*,<sup>43</sup> the spread of smallpox, and the abusive tax system of *encomiendas*<sup>44</sup> would all but exterminate the Taíno

---

*Aftershocks of History*: '[Ayiti] was the name that the founders of Haiti reached back to in 1804, seeking to connect their struggle for freedom from slavery with the earlier battles of indigenous peoples against Spanish invaders.' (2012: 18).

<sup>41</sup> A name erroneously thought to have indigenous origins, commonly used in the Dominican Republic, usually employed to exacerbate Taíno roots and diminish Hispaniola's African influence. (Fumagalli, 2015, p. 350).

<sup>42</sup> Most notably the Caribs of the Southern Lesser Antilles, whom the Taíno people were in constant conflict with. See: Rouse, 1993, p. 9.

<sup>43</sup> A custom of miscegenation which allowed marriages between colonisers and native women, creating a caste of mixed race *mestizos*, themselves never able to reach the social prestige or have the legal rights of full-blooded Spaniards.

<sup>44</sup> Formally established by Governor of Hispaniola Fray Nicolás de Ovando, it entailed, essentially, a taxing system in which labour was exchanged for protection. Of course, this being a colonial invention, the balance of power always sided heavily

population, and with them the majority of their myths, names and cultural practices,<sup>45</sup> thus relegating the Taíno era to, at best, becoming a prologue to the history of Hispaniola—a prelude of limited information, from which we know the names of all five Taíno chiefs and their respective chiefdoms, and, in the figure of Anacaona<sup>46</sup> we find the first in a long history of legendary insurgents, but we are not aware of individual accounts of everyday life; these are now effectively lost in time.

A century of scrimmages between colonial European powers across the Caribbean would give way to the establishment of the first French settlement in 1625, which would result, seven decades later with the Treaty of Ryswick,<sup>47</sup> in the Western third of Hispaniola being officially conceded by Spain to France. Over the decades that followed, the colony of Saint Domingue would become an export powerhouse, fuelled by a large contingent of slaves brought primarily from Congo, Guinea and Dahomey—slaves who spoke a plurality of languages<sup>48</sup> (most of them mutually incomprehensible)

---

with the Crown. The racial segregation resulting from these systems is thoroughly documented in Silvio Torres-Saillant's monograph *Introduction to Dominican Blackness*, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> The exception to the rule being traces of the Taíno Arawak language—in fact, a few words used today in Spanish and English (such as 'barbecue' and 'hurricane') derive from Taíno Arawak.

<sup>46</sup> Born in current day Léogâne, Haiti, into a family of chiefs—Anacaona was one of the two female Taíno chieftains, later murdered by the Spanish colonisers after refusing to be subservient, thus becoming an icon for rebellion and indigenous emancipation. In 2005, Edwidge Danticat published a novel entitled *Anacaona: Golden Flower, Haiti, 1490* for the young adult Royal Diaries series.

<sup>47</sup> See: Bellegarde-Smith, 1990: p. 50.

<sup>48</sup> Mostly languages deriving from the Niger-Congo area, such as Kwa, Gbe, Akan and Bantu. A comprehensive study of the roots that would later influence the creation of Haitian Kreyòl can be found in Claire Lefebvre's *Creole Genesis and the Acquisition of Grammar: The Case of Haitian Creole* (1998), a study that remarks upon the significant influence of native African languages, as opposed to learned Indo-European languages, in the conception of Kreyòl by contending that the 'creators of pidgins/creoles use the parametric values of their native languages in establishing

and slaves who would, by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, outnumber the white population in the island by almost fifteen-to-one.<sup>49</sup>

Inequality and segregation abounded, and not merely as a binomial interaction between white masters and black slaves. The levels of slavery themselves were often inseparable from racial demarcation, resulting in a pigmentocracy that ensued from the segregation of blacks and whites and featured a vast number of minute classifications<sup>50</sup> designed primarily as a method of population control. In the years that preceded the Haitian Revolution, the divisions were not merely racial but also social: the *grands blancs*, made up of major plantation owners who would later remain loyal to the post-revolutionary *ancien régime* of France, ruled over the *petits blancs*, the lower-class slave dealers, artisans and labourers who would shift their allegiances depending on their economic situation.<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile, the rest of the population would be heavily segregated with tags that defined their racial heritage. From *mestizaje* to *plaçage*,<sup>52</sup> the history of Hispaniola is, in

---

those of the language that they are creating and the semantic principles of their own grammar in concatenating morphemes and words in the new language' (1998:1).

<sup>49</sup> See: C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (p. 55).

<sup>50</sup> These classifications were collected in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century by Moreau De Saint-Méry in his work *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*—a study that defines the racialised categories and sub-categories of miscegenation in the island and very clearly shows the pigmentocratic obsessions of white colonists.

<sup>51</sup> See: Dubois, 2005, p. 35.

<sup>52</sup> Much like the Spanish practice of *mestizaje*, French *plaçage* allowed European men to wed women of African or Native American descent, and was seen as a crucial element of the social structure of Saint Domingue and parts of Louisiana in the southern United States.

essence, also the history of creolism.<sup>53</sup> Following the cruel practices of the Code Noir, promulgated by Louis XIV as a method of slavery control in the colonies, slaves identified as *maroons*<sup>54</sup> began fleeing from their masters and establishing communities in the Haitian mountains, while in the cities, a new class dubbed the *gens de couleur*, formed by the children of mixed-race couples, were free to accrue wealth, property and run plantations, until they too saw their liberties curtailed by official edicts.<sup>55</sup>

By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, insurgencies by *gens de couleur* culminated in the public execution of Vincent Ogé and Jean-Baptiste Chavannes, both rebellion leaders who sought refuge in the Spanish side of the island, but were delivered to Haitian authorities by the Royal Audiencia of Santo Domingo.<sup>56</sup> It is important to note that, by this point in time, the Eastern part of Hispaniola had become practically neglected by the Spanish

---

<sup>53</sup> The history of creolism as an ethnic construct is, by definition, heterogeneous, however, the uniqueness of Hispaniola with its binomial and often intertwined examples of Spanish-Latin American *criollismo* and French derived *créolité*, effectively turn the island into a microcosm of creolism as a socio-historical concept, as exemplified in Edouard Glissant's essay 'Creolization in the Making of the Americas'.

<sup>54</sup> 'The practice of *marronage*—running away from the plantations—was as old as slavery itself. In Saint-Domingue it took many forms. Africans brought into the colony by slavers, refusing their condition as property, often ran away soon after their arrival. They were prone to recapture because they lacked knowledge of the geography of the island and connections who could help them hide, although some residents did help them, sometimes by telling them the way to Spanish Santo Domingo. Plantation slaves sometimes left the direct supervision of the managers but remained nearby' (Dubois, 2005: 52).

<sup>55</sup> Laws were passed to restrict *gens de couleur* from several professions, carrying weapons in public, and attending social functions where whites were present. However, their ownership of land, slaves, and the growing export of coffee derived from these two factors allowed *gens de couleur* to keep substantial economic power, made evident later by their involvement in the Haitian Revolution. See: Chapter 2, pp. 27-62 of *The Black Jacobins* (James, 1938).

<sup>56</sup> An important passage of history covered in Chapter 3, pp. 62-65 of *The Black Jacobins*, James, 1938 and more extensively with added context in part one ('Background to the Revolution') of *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* by Carolyn E. Fick, pp. 15-90.

crown in favour of their new colonies in continental America. The demarcation between the impoverished Santo Domingo and the wealthy Saint Domingue (dubbed The Pearl of the Antilles) was, and still is, not merely geographical, but also cultural, linguistic and, crucially, economic. The deaths of rebels such as Ogé and Chavannes, though pertaining to the Braudelian level of short-term, personality-driven narrative, would ignite the fire of the following, crucial, period of Haitian (and consequently Dominican) history.

Dates, names, and events might be, as Braudel wrote, merely incidental to the development of long-term history, but it would be a mistake to form any concept of history in Hispaniola without referencing the importance, influence and meaning of the Haitian Revolution—the first and only successful slave-led revolution in Western history—an event remarkable not only for its uniqueness, but also for the subsequent obscuring of its initial achievements by politicians and historians from Europe and other parts of the American continent. In her 2003 book *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Culture of Slavery at the Age of Revolution*, Sybille Fischer sets out to analyse the constant misinformation surrounding the perception of the Haitian revolution abroad. This disavowal of history and the diminishment of its significance, she explains, is a crucial factor in the construction of the Creole nationalism found in present-day Dominican Republic. Fischer forms part of a group of academics who have attempted to re-evaluate the universal impact of the Haitian revolution by claiming that without paying attention to this event one cannot understand the whole Western concept of modernity. One of her arguments involves the hypothesis that G.W.F. Hegel was aware of the Haitian Revolution before postulating his master-slave dialectic in *The*

*Phenomenology of Spirit*<sup>57</sup>. Fischer also argues that the common notion expressed by Jürgen Habermas of modernity as an unfinished project that did not live up to its emancipatory potential is contradicted by the systematic suppression and lack of dissemination of a story and a manifesto in which aims of social equality and racial liberation held the same importance as issues of national sovereignty, not just in the geographical limits of Haiti, but beyond.

Many historians, writers and scholars from other Caribbean and Latin American countries,<sup>58</sup> themselves part of creole establishments, saw the Haitian revolution not as a source of inspiration for pan-American liberation, but rather as a violent threat to their accommodated way of life. This denial becomes truly baffling when one considers that Simon Bolívar, the grand figure of liberation in South America, refused to fully recognise the independence of Haiti even after seeking sanctuary there and accepting military aid from the first president of the republic, Alexandre Pétion. According to Fischer, the root of this historical disavowal from other parts of Latin America stemmed from racial fears shared by the white ruling classes and the creole middle class, fears that are very much prevalent in contemporary Latin America, obscenely visible in current-day Dominican Republic and in the way its judicial system deals with Haitian

---

<sup>57</sup> The argument of Hegel's awareness of the Haitian Revolution was raised by Susan Buck-Morss in her 2000 essay 'Hegel and Haiti' and further expanded in her 2009 book *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, which shows Hegel's systematic denial of the Haitian Revolution and its consequences in Marx's continuation of Hegel's theories, aiming to challenge the foundations of modernity as unbalanced and knowingly disconnected from racial struggles.

<sup>58</sup> A thorough review of the immediate reaction to the Haitian Revolution in Caribbean (more specifically Dominican) literature can be found in Chapter 8—'Fictions of Literary History' in *Modernity Disavowed* (p. 180).

immigration.<sup>59</sup> This class and racial demarcation is also paramount when analysing the development of Caribbean literature as a cultural construct. Using the example of Cuba in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Fischer shows that the elites were fully aware of and concerned about free people of colour becoming artisans, musicians and participating in other mid-range labours, thus founding academies and closed societies to keep bourgeois jobs and forms of high culture exclusive to their milieu (2004: 57). The novel as a form, in particular, became a self-serving method of cultural production that looked to Europe for inspiration and preached anything but inclusion between social classes. By analysing a variety of archives, poems and novels from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Fischer finds a symptomatic denial of the Haitian Revolution: it is not that the authors behind these texts were fully unaware of the revolution itself, they just chose to turn away from its achievements, leaving, yet again, lacunae of information surrounding the history of Haiti, Hispaniola, and its relationship to the rest of the Caribbean.

These gaps in the formal historical and fictional narrative of Hispaniola are not coincidental; they are the product of years of restriction and conscious silencing. In his 1995 book *Silencing the Past*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot questions existing assumptions of historiography and research methods by focusing on issues of subjectivity in historical production. For Trouillot, the exposition of facts in text is never neutral; it is always dependent on the partiality of the historian and the manner in which the facts are presented. This, in turn, revolves around a single issue: power. Yet, the idea of facts and narrative being two distinct, unavoidable, approaches to history is as old as historiography itself; what Trouillot eloquently postulates is that when examining the

---

<sup>59</sup> As evidenced by James Ferguson's 2007 report 'Migration in the Caribbean: Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Beyond' and by the promulgation and fallout of Sentencia TC 0168-13, as discussed above, p. 41.



creation of history as narrative we must always be aware not only of the role of power in producing facts and events, but also in *silencing* facts and events.

Silences, according to Trouillot, are part of the process of historical production at four stages: the moment of fact creation (through the selection of sources); the moment of fact assembly (the collection of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the creation of narratives); and the moment of retrospective significance (how history is assimilated in the public sphere). In the case of the Haitian Revolution, which covers an entire chapter of the book, Trouillot shows that all four stages of historical production have been marginalised, diminished or completely silenced by world history due to uneven uses of power. 'The Haitian Revolution entered history with the peculiar characteristic of being unthinkable even as it happened', writes Trouillot, 'how does one write a history of the impossible?' (1997: 73). The concept of a successful slave revolution was so unfathomable to contemporary historians that denial was the only rational reaction—and so, the facts were arranged to fit the limited worldview of those who wrote them whilst the international influence of Haiti, both then and now, has been too modest and marginalised to ensure the Haitian Revolution is assigned its rightful place of importance in world history.

Another factor Trouillot attributes to the lack of spread of the Haitian Revolution's successes is the immediate fate of the country itself. The unification of Hispaniola became a reality in 1822 when the second president of the Republic of Haiti, Jean-Pierre Boyer, took over Santo Domingo with little to no opposition from the diminished Dominican military. Haiti, now in charge of the entire island, would impose heavy taxation systems and enforce laws to restrict the Spanish language and certain

religious and cultural expressions, demarcating yet again a significant incongruity between the two ends of Hispaniola. This occupation, justified as a necessary act to protect Haitian (and consequently black) sovereignty, lasted twenty-two years, at which point Boyer's administration, struggling to pay a massive debt to France incurred in exchange for diplomatic recognition, was overturned by a group of liberal Dominican creoles, who established the first constitution of the Dominican Republic in 1844.<sup>60</sup> The rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was marked by a series of pseudo-independences involving the aid of protectorates to repel the threat of another Haitian invasion on the Dominican side; while Haiti would experience a succession of coups and spurts of economic growth stalled by its ostracism from the rest of the Caribbean and Europe, always subjected to the crippling effect of the French debt.<sup>61</sup>

When searching for *longue durée* patterns in the history of Hispaniola, it is evident that, even since the early chiefdoms of the Taíno tribes, the island has been witness to competing narratives—true unity has never been a reality—however, these narratives present several points in history where similarities (most of them adverse) could be examined. Entering the twentieth century, a parallel between Haiti and the Dominican Republic could certainly be drawn from the military occupations perpetrated by the United States on both sides of the island.

---

<sup>60</sup> This process and the shifting positions different European powers played in it is meticulously detailed by Gerald Horne in *Confronting Black Jacobins: The United States, the Haitian Revolution, and the Origins of the Dominican Republic*, p. 193-99.

<sup>61</sup> A vengeful indemnity of originally 150 million francs (3 billion dollars transposed to today's currency) that France imposed upon Haiti two decades after the revolution, in order, at least officially speaking, to recognise the nation internationally. (Dubois, 2003: 7).

The first wave of U.S. military troops, on direct orders from president Woodrow Wilson, landed in Port-au-Prince in 1915 shadowing the imperialist dogmas of financial dominance they had previously executed in Cuba. With Europe firmly entrenched in the Great War, the political establishment in the United States did not even require an elaborate narrative to proceed with what was seen by the subjective US press as a justified defence of corporate and economic interests in their so-called 'back yard'.<sup>62</sup> The economy of Haiti at the time was heavily reliant on German interests, although the constitution prohibited foreigners from owning land; this, added to the completion of the Panama Canal in 1914 and the U.S. need for access to it through the Windward Passage,<sup>63</sup> meant that the invasion was an economic necessity and a forceful, transparent method of establishing geopolitical hegemony over the region. Over the course of the twentieth century these practices would continue and become more opaque and intricate all over Latin America. The occupation of Haiti would officially last nineteen years, during which a new constitution that gave U.S.-based corporations free reign over the Haitian economy would be implemented alongside the systematic repression of those who opposed it.<sup>64</sup>

Meanwhile, the booming sugar industry in the Dominican Republic meant that the government had to implement official edicts for the import of labourers to be employed as cane cutters. A vast quantity of Haitians thus crossed the border and emigrated to the Eastern side of the island, resulting in the creation of so-called *bateys*,

---

<sup>62</sup> Pope Atkins, G. and Wilson, L. (1998: 12).

<sup>63</sup> The strait between the easternmost part of Cuba and the westernmost part of Hispaniola.

<sup>64</sup> The multiple meanings of the U.S. occupation of Haiti are discussed at length in Mary Renda's study *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*.

small shanty towns close to the cane fields where workers lived and laboured, often for meagre salaries and under penurious conditions. Mirroring their invasion of Haiti, U.S. military forces would take over the Dominican Republic in 1916, allegedly to offer protection to the U.S. Consulate, but in reality as a method of establishing total economic dominance over the region.<sup>65</sup> Not only were the nation's finances now controlled by the National City Bank of New York, making the profits of the sugar industry essentially part of the U.S. economic system—this imperialist legacy also brought about the creation of instruction centres based in U.S. barracks: schools designed to train police and military forces that would eventually run the nation with the explicit purpose of protecting U.S. interests at all costs, a practice which was paralleled in Haiti to train their own military forces, with similar destructive results.<sup>66</sup>

When U.S. troops officially left the Dominican Republic in 1924, they left behind a weak political system ripe for the manipulation of the electoral system. Six years later, under dubious circumstances, Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, a commander of the U.S. trained Dominican army, would receive a letter from U.S. president Edgar Hoover, congratulating him on an auspicious victory and wishing him the best in his future endeavours as the president of the republic. Born the son of a Spanish sergeant father and a Franco-Haitian mulatto mother, Trujillo would rule the Dominican Republic for thirty-one years and establish a regime of stern military rule, creating a single party political system that allowed him free reign over all walks of civil life—including a

---

<sup>65</sup> A more detailed analysis of the U.S. political and military interference in the Dominican Republic can be found in James Ferguson's 1992 book *Dominican Republic: Beyond the Lighthouse*.

<sup>66</sup> Detailed historical accounts of the military role and influence the United States played in both sides of Hispaniola can be found in Elizabeth Abbott's *Haiti: The Duvaliers and Their Legacy* and *The Dominican Republic and the United States: From Imperialism to Transnationalism* by G. Pope Atkins and Larman Wilson.

distinctive obsession with the re-assembling of history and popular language. Soon, the capital of Santo Domingo was renamed Ciudad Trujillo, statues of the dictator were erected across the country, and his own cult of personality would reach grandiose levels of egocentrism that resulted in the mythologising of his figure as public policy. All of this was accompanied by the brutal oppression of any perceived opposition through the fabrication of fierce torture systems and, in the case of the 1937 Parsley Massacre (that will be discussed later in this chapter), racially-driven genocide.

As this chapter aims to show, the lore surrounding Trujillo's symbols and the influence his regime exerted over Dominican history was ripe for literary creation. The negative effect of the Trujillo years in shaping contemporary Dominican identity is a theme that runs through Junot Díaz's work, carefully referencing prominent figures and events not from a merely representational focus, but also to denote a symbolic background for the reconfiguration of greater preoccupations.

### **A Zafa for every Fukú: Redressing Trujillo in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao***

The horror and abuse of the Trujillo era are omnipresent in Díaz's entire work to date, but his sole novel is unambiguously dedicated to shedding light on the individual cases that represent communal experiences lost in the ether of official, often farcical, history. Speaking to Edwidge Danticat in an interview for *Bomb Magazine* in 2007, Díaz directly referred to the idea of a subject incarnating collective history, one of the main recurring themes in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*:

There are, as you and I well know, certain kinds of people that no one wants to build the image of a nation around. Even if these people are in fact the nation itself. (2007)

The novel opens with an epigraph from *The Schooner Flight*, a poem by Derek Walcott that ends with the lines ‘Either I am nobody or / I am a nation.’ The eponymous hero of the story, Oscar de León,<sup>67</sup> also known as Oscar Wao, spends much of the book as the former. He is overweight, has an obsession with science fiction, and does not resemble the stereotypical, womanising, brash Dominican man, rendering most of his romantic aspirations futile. Throughout the novel, Díaz constantly engages in a pursuit to reinforce preconceptions and then proceeds to transgress their limits, a method which is not merely reserved to his characterisation of individual examples of members of the Dominican diaspora but also to larger, often repeating, historical patterns. The construction of the main narrative is interspersed with parallel reminders of Dominican history in the shape of footnotes<sup>68</sup> written by the narrator Yunior (an alter ego of sorts for Díaz, and a character who appears in all three of his published works to date). These footnotes become a device that connects Oscar’s story to that of his sister, mother and grandparents and consequently, the history of the island with that of the United States.

*The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* constructs its historiographical foundations from the bottom up. The stories found within the protagonist’s family tree are closely associated to the Trujillo regime, interspersing a history of privilege with

---

<sup>67</sup> Also the name of a popular Venezuelan salsa singer, never directly acknowledged by Díaz, but whose omnipresence in 90s music charts across Latin America would mean Díaz is likely to be familiar with at least his name.

<sup>68</sup> In a knowing reference to Patrick Chamoiseau’s *Texaco*—a novel whose non-linear plot is punctuated by footnotes featuring excerpts from journals and letters to further expand the main narrative thread: a cross-generational story of slavery and exploitation in Martinique.

silences produced by calamities both individual and communal. The plural points of view found throughout the novel are always collected and re-ordered by the narrator Yunior, but even his authorial voice does not constitute a totality, nor does it present the reader with a conclusive story—Yunior’s own detachment is limited by his observations on Dominican history as a member of the diaspora, and his direct relationship with Oscar and his sister Lola (with whom, it is noted, he had an affair) belies his neutrality. What Díaz presents, through Yunior, should not be construed as a wholly trustworthy historiography of the Cabral/De León family or, indeed, of the Dominican Republic, instead his testimony fits in the gap between the recollections of common history and the knowingly artificial ‘Official Story’ promulgated by the Trujillo regime and its remnants. As Díaz argues:

It is the gap between the Real Story and the Official Story that interests me. It is inside this gap that the best writers, or at least the writers I admire the most, often reside. (in Del Castillo, 2016)

In *Oscar Wao*, Díaz translates the notion of the bridging of two different histories into his concept of the “*Fukú americanus*,” a curse of the New World which haunts Hispaniola and the lives of Oscar’s family members throughout the novel. State violence and the individual become entwined in the myriad anecdotes and historical events found throughout the book; Rafael Trujillo’s regime influences everything and everyone either directly or indirectly. Through a multi-layered, crosscutting narrative, the reader becomes initially acquainted with Oscar and his immediate family—his mother Beli and sister Lola, who have a strained relationship based on the abuse by the former and the rebelliousness of the latter. Instead of following a direct chronological order, however, Díaz chooses to intersperse each chapter with the family’s history, from present-day

New Jersey to the Dominican Republic throughout the twentieth century—this could be dismissed as merely a cross-referential narrative tool, but is most certainly designed to portray history, more specifically, family history, as an inter-dependent web of *longue durée* connections. As Díaz himself articulated in an interview with *World Literature Today*: 'If you think about it, the shadow of history doesn't go away. You pretend that it's your shadow, but it's actually a shadow from a past that's very old and very long,' (2008) denoting yet again the conscious bridging of past and present.

Díaz attempts to create a broken thread of switched time frames by interspersing chapters set in the novel's recent present (that is to say, Oscar's story, which ends a few years before the writing of the narrative itself) and the distant past. If one were to re-arrange the novel chronologically, it would begin in the fifth chapter with the story of Oscar's grandfather Abelard Luis Cabral—the inclusion of dates in each chapter title is a knowing attempt to determine history as the starting point, made even more evident by the opening paragraph and its accompanying footnote:

When the family talks about it all—which is like never—they always begin in the same place: with Abelard and the Bad Thing he said about Trujillo\*

\*There are other beginnings certainly, better ones, to be sure—if you ask me I would have started when the Spaniards “discovered” the New World—or when the U.S. invaded Santo Domingo in 1916—but if this was the opening that the de Leóns chose for themselves, then who am I to question their historiography? (2007: 211)

In his own hyper-conscious way, Díaz posits the concept of a family historiography as the elocution of the present through the past and the connections between their history and that of Hispaniola. Abelard, a well-heeled surgeon who belonged to the upper classes in the Dominican city of La Vega, is portrayed as an apolitical scholar living a luxurious life in an impoverished land rife with inequalities.



He owned a fourteen-room mansion with groves of almonds and mango trees, another apartment in the city of Santiago, six horses, five servants, a cellar full of imported food from Europe, and a series of businesses including two supermarkets, a cement factory, and rural estate. All his wealth, the narrator Yunior maintains, was accrued by portraying himself in public as a devoted Trujillista, but also by developing a sense of denial for the brutalities that happened around him and keeping 'his head, eyes and nose safely tucked into his books' (2007: 213), a method of escapism through literature that his grandson Oscar would later inherit. This imperviousness to the suffering of others is, however, not total—Abelard is also said to have helped survivors from the Parsley Massacre by healing their machete wounds without making any comments, and likewise not asking any questions when his wife hid their Haitian servants. This being the Dominican Republic during Trujillo's regime, however, meant that violence and anguish were ultimately inescapable.

As a respectable member of the upper class, Abelard was frequently required to attend official functions and keep close relations with Trujillo's realm of power. This presented a problem for a man with young daughters at a time when Trujillo's sexual appetite reached mythical levels. Abelard is constantly seen rejecting the invitations of Trujillo for almost a year, but comes to realise his only two options are either to sacrifice his eldest daughter or risk his own life. Díaz's own argument is perfectly clear: in Trujillo's Dominican Republic there was no such thing as moral immunity, even the most seemingly adjusted members of a profligate upper class had to be subservient to a higher power, the lack of any political action would always lead to reprehensible consequences, and there was no reprieve from the threat of violence. Abelard refuses, for the final time, to take his daughter to a function held by Trujillo and is arrested the

morning after on account of slander and gross calumny for a joke he never made about the president. History is reconfigured to fit the needs of the powerful and false information becomes fact, not only for the public sphere, but also for the family of Abelard who are never fully aware of the truth—a fictional account in the context of the novel, but also a very common occurrence in the history of the Dominican Republic.<sup>69</sup>

The incarceration and torture of Abelard becomes the catalyst for the collapse of the Cabral family; his wife, at the time of his arrest pregnant with their third daughter Beli (the mother of Oscar and Lola), attempts to hold the nucleus together, but eventually commits suicide two months after giving birth. The eldest daughter Jacquelyn is found two years later drowned in only two feet of water; three years after her death, her sister Astrid is killed while praying in a church. According to the narrator, Abelard's sacrifice and his lack of previous action came too late: Trujillo appears to have been directly responsible for his middle daughter's murder. Abelard himself is declared dead seven years into his prison sentence, but survives for eight more under constant torture, finally dying at La Corona prison in 1961. Trujillo's regime, thus, is ultimately responsible for the expunging of the Cabral family narrative—all of their businesses and properties are redistributed among government officials and all the documented evidence of Abelard's life and his existence is destroyed. The silencing of history is depicted by Díaz as systematic and the erasure of the Cabrals would have been complete, were it not for the survival of Beli, and the subsequent recounting of the events by the narrator Yuniór—though how he managed to gather all this information is, crucially, never fully explained.

---

<sup>69</sup> See: López-Calvo, 2005: 63.

Abelard's story comes as a prelude to the climactic development of the final chapter; if read from start to finish, the reader would already be acquainted with most of what follows chronologically—the story of Abelard's third daughter Hypatía Belicia Cabral also known as Beli, which develops throughout the third chapter. While the novel centres around the contemporary generation embodied in Oscar and Lola, it could be argued that Beli's story is the central axis of the narrative—serving as the middle point between generations and geographical locations. Although Beli is initially presented as a tough, almost ruthless, matriarch in the first two chapters, the reader eventually learns of the brutal vicissitudes that made her leave the Dominican Republic for the United States. Following the imprisonment of her father and the death of her mother, she is passed from guardian to guardian, distancing her from her immediate family (and consequently, her history), eventually landing in the poor rural area of Azua, under the care of distant relatives. Díaz shows the wide spaces of silence left by the obscuring of facts by littering her biography with voids—we know her adoptive mother left the small village they lived in and claimed Beli was dead, but this is a smoke screen for reality: Beli, by that point a small child, is actually sold to another family as a maid. Unlike Abelard and his privileged decision to turn away from the reality of Dominican Republic, his daughter Beli grows up surrounded by poverty, forced to struggle with the realities of the country, with no knowledge of her social lineage.

Eventually, Abelard's estranged cousin, known as La Inca,<sup>70</sup> manages to find and adopt her. Yunior remarks upon the limitations of his own findings by confessing that

---

<sup>70</sup> One of the instances in Díaz's work where he uses an unusual reference (the Inca empire of South America was completely dislocated, both historically and culturally, from Hispaniola) to craft a sense of Latin American cohesion, at least aesthetically. See: Chapter II, p. 117.

the details of Beli's first nine years of life were never known, she always kept them secret—another example of the silencing of history, this time, due to personal trauma—and this, in turn, is interpreted by Yunior as 'the amnesia that was so common throughout the Islands, five parts denial, five parts negative hallucination' (2007: 159), showing that his role as a narrator is not merely one of playing a story teller, but also of commenting on the characters' Caribbean condition. Much like her father before her, Beli symbolises the inability to confront social reality and the suppression of history that derives from such a stance. La Inca provides Beli with shelter and a semblance of solidity, enrolling her in a Catholic private school, but her lack of belonging in the wealthy elite, and crucially, the dark tone of her skin, positions her as an outcast and makes her the target of jokes and abuse, which she successfully fends off with the experience and toughness gained from her impoverished upbringing. The years of Trujillo roll on and the influence of the man himself on all walks of life remains ubiquitous. Aged thirteen, Beli falls in love with Jack Pujols, the school's whitest boy, whose mother was a beauty queen and whose father was a colonel in Trujillo's air force. The social order of class exploitation and racial segregation is portrayed in this fleeting relationship—while Beli wholly offers herself emotionally, Jack uses her for temporary physical pleasure, throwing her aside once his needs are satisfied—reinforcing the notion of power in the Dominican Republic being intrinsically linked to issues of race, sexual domination, capital, and social standing.

Beli's dreams of social ascendance and her innate restlessness draw her closer to the structures of power in the dictatorship, as she becomes romantically involved with a character known only as The Gangster: one of Trujillo's main henchmen who occupied a singular position of high standing after marrying Trujillo's own sister.

Determined and gullible, Beli is once again used for physical pleasure and becomes pregnant—the curse of the Cabral family strikes yet again when The Gangster’s wife learns about his hidden affair and uses her brother’s tactics and influence, ordering Beli’s abduction and forced abortion by the secret police. After a failed attempt to escape, Beli is once again captured and taken to a sugar cane field (similar perhaps to the one where her son meets his demise in the final chapter)<sup>71</sup>—here, Yuniór proceeds to use various unofficial historical sources to recreate the torture methods and violent tactics employed by Trujillo to punish his enemies: they fracture her arms, break her ribs, injure her clavicle, bruise her internal organs, and blow out her teeth. ‘Was there time for a rape or two?’ the narrator asks ‘I suspect there was, but we shall never know because it’s not something she talked about’ (2007: 125). Díaz, of course, uses this scene to evidence the resilience of tortured Dominicans—Beli survives even if her unborn child doesn’t—and to exemplify another instance of the silencing of history through the use of extreme violence.

Months later, after reaching new levels of self-awareness through survival, Beli is still harassed by a secret police determined to leave no stone unturned and no job incomplete. Even though peril seems to be unavoidable, La Inca manages to find an opportunity for her to escape to New York and, at the age of sixteen, Beli leaves the island to join the Dominican diaspora in the United States. The man sitting next to her on the flight will become the father of her two children, Lola and Oscar, and eventually

---

<sup>71</sup> Sugar cane fields, with all their significance to the economic history of Hispaniola, are often a leitmotif in Dominican literature, most notably portrayed to dramatic effect in Juan Bosch’s short story ‘La Nochebuena de Encarnación Mendoza’ and throughout Ramón Marrero Aristy’s 1939 novel *Over*, an early example of the abuses committed against Haitian cane workers in the fields.

desert his family leaving them only the de León surname; the curse of the Cabrals, however, remains constant, crossing geographical and generational borders.

Díaz has repeatedly stated in interviews<sup>72</sup> that part of his drive as a fiction writer derives from the silences and incomplete information given to him by his own family. The manner in which he articulates this in his fiction is by depicting it through theories of trauma and suppressed memories. The subduing of these memories is, in turn, another method of impunity exercised by dictatorships and repression—whenever an individual remains silent the created narrative of the powers-that-be becomes consolidated. In ‘Guilty of History’, historian Hayden White discusses the elusiveness of memory and the conscious withholding of facts by official versions:

[...] history is indeed as much about forgetting as it is about remembering [...] a great deal of history has been written in order to cover over or hide or deflect attention from ‘what really happened’ in the past, by presenting an ‘official version’ that substitutes a part of the past for the whole. (2010: 323)

In this essay on time and narrative, White argues that memory is more dependent on emotions than on facts, the memory traces that matter the most are those that come in the form of an image charged with emotional valence. He contends that in *our time* and *our modernity* one of the key emotions, an emotion that is very much linked to physical violence, is that of humiliation. Our modernity is defined by having developed institutions and instruments for the systematic humiliation of entire populations. This is why, he argues, we need an adequate theory of forgetting to accompany any theory of memory. This does not imply an indiscriminate forgetting as a way of forgiving. but rather, a method of forgetting that will distinguish between what

---

<sup>72</sup> See: Sarcano, 2002 and Danticat, 2007.

can be legitimately forgiven and what cannot. By analysing the work of Paul Ricoeur,<sup>73</sup> White questions whether this method of personal history creation is, in fact, an assembled psychological reaction to the need for a linear explanation of trauma—a linear explanation which, although presented in a cross-cutting manner, is ever present in *Oscar Wao*, a work of fiction that has memory and trauma at its core. The question would be if fiction, enclosed in the formal parameters of the novel, could be as acute and precise as a work of historiography.

However, the blurred parallels between history and fiction must also be taken into account. In these days of hurried media consumption, individuals have grown accustomed to and expect certain narrative devices not only from fiction, but also from history itself. Whether from non-fiction documentary, news reporting, or oral testimonies, stories, especially tragic ones, must have a clear beginning based on the exposition of facts, a certain struggle (the more titanic the better) and, more often than not, a happy or at least a closed ending. Ricoeur argues that this has led humans to prefigure their actions as narrative trajectories. ‘Thus, one meaning of a given sequence of specifically “historical” (as against, say, a sequence of “natural”) events, can be said to derive from the “configurative” relations obtaining between the intention motivating an action and its outcome, effects, or consequences.’ (in White, 2010, 340) Narrative thus becomes a distinct cognitive mode rather than just another form of discourse. In the case of Díaz and, as we shall see shortly, Danticat, their gathering of stories, whether they be familiar or second-hand, and the ensuing creation of cohesive narratives, acts as a method of explaining their own past through fiction, but they are also influenced by

---

<sup>73</sup> Specifically Ricoeur’s study *Memory, History, Forgetting* which questions the historiographical hierarchy created when we appraise certain events at the expense of others.

the narrative elements used by their own families to configure these same stories. Although the techniques of their fiction often feature flashbacks and intersperse periods of time, their need to create a logical history of their own migratory experiences is very much linear, and draws many of its reference points from official history—and the entangled relationship between memory and forgetting.

The duality of remembrance and forgetfulness is deeply linked to migratory experiences. In the case of the character of Belicia Cabral, this is evidenced by her traumatic escape from the Dominican Republic and the subsequent withholding of her story from her children. Geographical distance becomes a method to distance herself from her own history and there are certain things that she would rather disregard in favour of silence—the type of memories that shatter and become shards of silenced information, pieces of a puzzle that future generations will base their own sense of belonging in. In the case of Oscar, his own quest to join the dots and reconstruct this history and his identity will lead him to death in the climaxing chapter of the novel, thus seemingly closing the circle of violence that started in the previous generations of his family by the same forces of repression that once chased Beli out of the island. In a sense, Oscar and Yunior's need to articulate that which has remained silenced is a method of self-discovery similar to the one undertaken by Díaz—an ideological way of filling the gaps through historiographical fiction. According to Braudel, 'historical storytelling was ideological in the extent to which it transformed historical events into the stuff of 'theatre'' (in White, 2010: 276)—as in Rafael Trujillo's tendency to create his own lore and, by doing so, affirm his place in history with meticulous authority. What Díaz does in his work is to decipher these mythologies, arguing, much like Braudel, that the history written by the so-called heroes is incomplete, subjective, and



farcical, choosing instead to illuminate the lives of everyday people, who up to this point acted only as spectators. This is the role that literature plays in historiographical creation; it deconstructs the notion that common people, whose names do not decorate avenues and parks, are merely bit-players of history, subordinate and secondary to the lives of military or political leaders. In examining the complexity behind every immigrant's journey, Díaz offers another explanation, one that places humanist values at the core, and one that opens possibilities for empathy and debate. Through the expression of the minutiae of trajectories and overlapping histories, Díaz's extraterritorial approach to literature transcends the material by placing the spotlight on humans, and by doing so, creates opportunities to constantly examine history, diminishing the role of those who attempted to write it to fit their own consolidation of power. Yet he is also creating a self-mythology of history from the point of view of an author, a privileged first-hand witness of the repercussions brought about by the unevenness of history.

**Cutting Through Time:  
The Parsley Massacre in *The Farming of Bones***

Although stories of immigrants make up the vast majority of Edwidge Danticat's fictional output, her work differs from Díaz's in that several of her characters never leave the geographic boundaries of their native land. Her novels and short story collections, where individual tales of struggle are always linked to grander political systems, are inseparable from the history of Haiti; each book can be interpreted as a piece of the puzzle that, when analysed as a complete œuvre, paints a vivid picture of twentieth-century Haitian history. Her first novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* exposes the nationalistic propaganda and state-sanctioned methods of violent control imposed by

the Duvalier regime and crafts a story of feminine resistance around them; *Krik? Krak?* features stories of extreme survival with the looming backdrop of unavoidable tragic events, ever present even if tacitly; *The Dew Breaker* demystifies the inhuman image of the Tontons Macoutes<sup>74</sup> and proposes migration as a method of transformation, though not of redemption. However, one novel stands above the rest as a clear-cut example of historiography through the individual viewpoint of a specific event. Released in 1998, her second novel *The Farming of Bones* seems specifically designed to show the effects major events (in this case the ruthlessness and brutality of the Parsley Massacre, which we will proceed to analyse) have on individuals—individuals who, in most frameworks outside of fiction, would become contested numbers, the minutiae of their unsettled stories lost in the ether of political haranguing, but who find a detailed articulation of their struggles in Danticat’s work.

In its formal construction, *The Farming of Bones* features two main narrative registers belonging to the same voice: Amabelle Desir—a Haitian orphan working for a wealthy Spanish-Dominican family in the fictional border town of Alegría. The main arc of the story is told in first-person past tense with a conventional approach; but interspersed between chapters we find small sections printed with a different typeface and written in a more poetic style, aiming to bring the reader closer to Amabelle’s internal remembrances and her sentimental relationship with Sebastien Onius, a cane cutter from a nearby plantation. As in most of Danticat’s output, the limen of life and death becomes a recurring motif and catalyst for the starting plot of the book. Amabelle, a skilled midwife like her parents before her, helps with the birth of two

---

<sup>74</sup> The brutal paramilitary militia of Duvalier Senior, who were recruited from all walks of life and who swore total loyalty to the regime. Nicknamed by the citizens after a mythological bogeyman, very loosely translated as “Uncle Gunnysack”.

twins in the house where she works. From the very beginning, the divisions between Dominican owners and Haitian servants are laid bare—even though Amabelle grew up together with the mother of the children, she still refers to her with the honorific *Señora* Valencia, her primary role in the household, more than one of equitable friendship, is one of servitude. The second chapter concludes with the difficult birth of twins Rosalinda and Rafael and a telling sign of how the separation between Haitians and Dominicans is not merely economic, but crucially, racial. Upon seeing trails of blood in her newborn daughter's face, Valencia asks: "Amabelle do you think my daughter will always be the color she is now? My poor love, what if she's mistaken for one of your people?" (1998: 12) This division between 'us' and 'them', and the clear demarcations of otherness are vital when analysing the novel and its attempted reflection of the social realities that saturate the relationship not only of individuals, but also the one between the Dominican Republic and Haiti as national and racial concepts.

The reader subsequently learns through a series of flashbacks of Amabelle's tragic back-story—her parents took her from her native Cap-Haïtien to the Dominican town of Dajabón as a young child merely to purchase cooking pots, without realising that the Massacre River (which in parts demarcates Haiti from the Dominican Republic) had soared due to a hurricane, making their return impossible. In explicit detail, Danticat describes the traumatic drowning of Amabelle's parents and her subsequent adoption by Valencia's father Don Ignacio, a wealthy Spaniard who spends most of the novel listening to news of the Spanish Civil War through his transistor radio. Back in 1937 Alegría, the birth of Valencia's children brings about another tragedy: rushing back to his wife's side, her husband Pico Duarte (a military man and supporter of Rafael Trujillo's regime) kills a Haitian cane worker with his automobile—a death that is

quickly brushed off by Duarte, but becomes central for the development of the early plot.

In the chapters that comprise the first half of the book, Danticat constantly questions the uneven value of death while giving the reader access to two different approaches to mourning. The in-between status of Amabelle as a member of a Dominican household who is also in touch with the Haitian cane cutting community places her in the middle of two differing realities. Details of the automobile accident eventually become clearer and work analogously—while the perpetrators of the murder are too concerned with the birth of twins, the Haitian cane-cutters are grieving the death of Joel, the young boy run over by Duarte. Infuriated by the death of his friend, Amabelle's lover Sebastien (who happened to be a witness at the scene of the murder) thinks of retaliation, but his plans are dampened by the quiet sorrow of Joel's father Kongo. The image of Kongo, though pandering to the wise village elder stereotype, is often mirrored by Don Ignacio, who seems to be the only member of the dominant class to feel any remorse for Joel's death (Don Ignacio's own displacement as a Spanish émigré is also treated by Danticat as a sign of empathy with the Haitian workers and, evidently, with his adopted daughter Amabelle). A further parallel is drawn with the premature death of Rafael, one of the baby twins. Now both milieus have to face contiguous tragedies, however, the processes of anguish are soon dwarfed by a much larger impending catastrophe.

In essence, *The Farming of Bones* is a story about death, remembrance and subjective bereavement—Pico Duarte kills Joel, yet the event is incidental, his grief is solely reserved for the death of his son. The various approaches to death sketch a

picture in which the limits are explicitly defined, the extraneous condition of the Other and the lack of empathy inherent in a colonial setting are recurring themes in the book. Racial, social and economic divisions are made evident in the reaction both communities have towards death, and through them Danticat creates a hierarchy of sentiment, personalising the stories found (and often lost) within acts of mass murder and exalting the precision with which fiction attempts to expand and magnify the rather impersonal facts and numbers of history.

History rapidly imposes itself on *The Farming of Bones* after the first act, when a cane worker advises Amabelle to leave the Dominican Republic as soon as possible—according to hearsay Rafael Trujillo had decreed the expulsion and elimination of all Haitians through military and civilian action. But her logic, drawn from her own basic knowledge of history and economy, refuses to take heed of these warnings, dismissing them as mere rumours:

There were always rumours, rumours of war, of land disputes, of one side of the island planning to invade the other. These were the grand fantasies of presidents wanting the whole island to themselves. This could not touch people like me, nor people like Yves, Sebastien, and Kongo who worked the cane fields. They were giving labor to the land. The Dominicans needed the sugar from the cane for their cafecitos and dulce de leche. They needed money from the cane. (140)

What Danticat excludes from Amabelle's vision in this paragraph is the rather incongruous and inflammatory rhetoric of the Trujillo regime. Indeed, a reader who approaches *The Farming of Bones* with no previous knowledge of Dominican or Haitian history would naturally draw the same conclusions as the narrator. However, reality was far more brutal. By 1937, just over two decades after the U.S. invasion, the public sphere in the Dominican Republic was riding a wave of xenophobia and *Anti-*

*Haitianismo*<sup>75</sup> instigated by the extreme nationalistic discourse of Trujillo's regime. This represented a discourse which was itself rooted in biased history and knowingly pulled strings of collective fear already in place after years of invasions and false sovereignties, and also, a discourse which played on the racial dread of a black Hispaniola—a deeply psychological trauma which is relevant even today, years after the apparent fall of the dictatorship as a political entity.<sup>76</sup>

The trigger for the Parsley Massacre is often attributed to population density in the borderlands and the lack of demarcation and migratory control over them.<sup>77</sup> This explanation, of course, purges the event of its racial connotations and the economic inequality prevalent in the tragedy—as Danticat shows in *The Farming of Bones*, the dependence of Haitian workers on Dominican soil was one of survival, whereas to Dominican landowners, workers were merely interchangeable pieces easily bought and sold. The rapid brutality with which these historical events unfold essentially splits the novel into two parts: what starts as a social novel (almost in a 19<sup>th</sup>-century European style) of castes and divisions swiftly turns into a dystopian tale of endurance. The Dominican characters are left behind, and though we briefly see Pico Duarte working with the firing squads enacting Trujillo's orders, we do not hear from Amabelle's adopted family until the very last chapter. Significantly, the emotional heft of the book

---

<sup>75</sup> An over-arching term to describe the cultural reticence and prejudice from Dominicans towards Haitians, tracing back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century with the arrival of African slaves, truly cemented in the 18<sup>th</sup> century after the Haitian Revolution and the subsequent invasion of Santo Domingo, and institutionalised and promulgated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the Trujillo regime. A thorough historical analysis of Anti-Haitianismo can be found in Ernesto Sagás' 2000 book *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic*.

<sup>76</sup> See: Introduction, p. 42 and Chapter III, p. 216.

<sup>77</sup> Ernesto Sagás' study *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic* draws clear parallels between constructions of racism and economic justifications, p. 34.

is not necessarily seen in the violent scenes during the massacre (these are often written in a blunt, dry manner), but rather in the aftermath, starting with Amabelle's persecution and the forced return to her homeland.

The story turns to stark realism when describing Amabelle's escape from the Dominican Republic—Danticat meticulously shows, through four chapters and almost sixty pages, the painstaking and melodramatic process of exile. Upon reaching Dajabón with a small group of refugees from the cane fields, Amabelle is tortured by Dominican civilians for not being able to pronounce the word '*perejil*'<sup>78</sup>—referencing the now infamous name of the massacre, remembered in Haiti as '*Kout kouto a*'<sup>79</sup> and in the Dominican Republic as '*El Corte*'.<sup>80</sup> Scathed, diminished, but alive, the group makes their way through deserted settlements, the smell of burnt corpses never far behind. Throughout several stations of their trip, exiles share stories of capture and torture, sometimes too graphic for Amabelle to grasp. However, Danticat also shows the nurturing relationships of makeshift communities, the care, intimacy and familiarity of people with a shared experience, which goes one step further than Amabelle's initial association with her adopted Dominican family in Alegría. These methods of history interpretation by individuals, wearily attempting to make sense of cruelty, are clearly seen in the dialogues between the survivors:

"The ruin of the poor is their poverty," Tibon went on. "The poor man, no matter who he is, is always despised by his neighbors. When you stay too long at a neighbor's house, it's only natural that he become weary of you and hate you." (178)

---

<sup>78</sup> The elocution in Haitian creole and French of the *r* would be closer to the *l* sound and the Spanish-Caribbean pronunciation of the letter *j* is too idiosyncratic to fake, therefore giving away the linguistic identity of the suspect.

<sup>79</sup> Loosely translated as 'the knife blow' or 'the stabbing'.

<sup>80</sup> 'The Cut'—a dry, blunt, almost bureaucratic way of describing the event.

Danticat spends the final third of the book giving voice to the victims, assembling a small truth and reconciliation commission in every interaction. The use of storytelling as a method of processing harsh realities is proposed as a crucial part of migratory experiences and as a process of cleansing, necessary to move on and to reassemble some semblance of normality. Now in Haiti, the sole survivors from the preceding chapters are Amabelle and Yves, a young cane cutter friend of her partner Sebastien—who, along with his sister Mimi, is now missing and presumed dead. The need for Sebastien's existence to be acknowledged becomes a driving force for Amabelle, although she holds very little hope of finding him alive. Back in her native Cap-Haïtien, she overhears a tour guide telling the story of Henri Christophe:<sup>81</sup> "Famous men never truly die, [...] It is only those nameless and faceless who vanish like smoke into the early morning air." (1998: 280) Amabelle, still processing the grief of Sebastien's disappearance, adjusts the phrase on the following page: 'Men with names never truly die. It is only the nameless and faceless who vanish like smoke into the early morning air.' (1998: 281)—this crucial turn of phrase could be construed to be at the basis of *The Farming of Bones*, the *raison d'être* for most of Edwidge Danticat's work, and a perfect embodiment of Braudel's theory of *longue durée*, as analysed at the start of this chapter.

The act of naming as a method of remembrance is not only a technique of constructing language to erect memories; it is also, as shown by Danticat's work, a fight

---

<sup>81</sup> Or Henri the First, a leader of the Haitian Revolution who, after becoming president of his own domain in Northern Haiti from 1807 to 1811, self-proclaimed himself King Henri I for the following nine years, established a European-like court and built the Citadelle Laferrière, a fortress south of Cap-Haïtien which serves as a reference point in *The Farming of Bones*.



against the anonymity of numbers; a tool of resistance that reminds us of uncomfortable truths. These are the names of people left behind, some burnt to the ground, some whose bodies were never found, people who breathed, worked, had families and aspirations, hometowns and houses to go back to, yet they were killed for reasons grander than themselves, but more crushingly, their names and the stories they carried with them were suppressed, at best turned into digits, conveniently erased so that their story could very well be repeated under a similar incarnation, forming part of an unjust cyclical history full of silences—silences which demand to be filled, even if only through language.

But with the reconstruction of history comes another question: who is willing to listen or document these stories? There is another curious thread running through *The Farming of Bones* that sees the Catholic Church as unofficial historiographer. This begins far back in the early chapters located in Alegría with the introduction of Father Romain, who, hailing also from Cap-Haïtien, offers Amabelle a job working in newly built Haitian hospitals. Describing one of his sermons, she says:

In his sermons to the Haitian congregants of the valley he often reminded everyone of common ties: language, foods, history, carnival, songs, tales, and prayers. His creed was one of memory, how remembering—though sometimes painful—can make you strong. (73)

Seeing a priest portrayed as the keeper of culture and memory should come as no surprise for anyone familiar with Danticat's work or her biography;<sup>82</sup> ecclesiastic

---

<sup>82</sup> Her uncle, with whom she spent most of her formative years in Haiti, worked as a Baptist minister—his story makes up the nucleus of her non-fiction book *Brother, I'm Dying*. Her upbringing and Catholic education too is constantly prevalent in many of her stories (see: Chapter II, p. 139). When asked about her own faith, she has stated: 'I'm very open to all kinds of faiths. I still attend a Baptist church in

figures in her books are often portrayed in a positive manner, but this does not mean they are exempt of questioning. In the midst of Amabelle's escape, priests and nuns are the ones looking for survivors to take them to hospitals, and later, in Haiti, the priests at the Cathedral are in charge of listening and marking down testimonials of the massacre. Amabelle ponders if this could help anyone, while Yves remains sceptical, fearing Trujillo himself to be behind the scheme:

They're collecting tales for newspapers and radio men. The Generalissimo has found ways to buy and sell the ones here. Even this region has been corrupted with his money. [...] I know what will happen, [...] You tell the story and then it's retold as they wish, written in words you do not understand, in a language that is theirs, and not yours. (1998: 246)

Searching for a small modicum of hope regarding Sebastien, Amabelle goes to the Cathedral, where a priest tells her they are no longer listening to stories about the slaughter: "It was taking all our time, and there is so much other work to be done." (1998: 249) The church, therefore, becomes a one-sided confessionary unable to offer solutions, giving up on collecting and enunciating the stories told to them, rendering the tales of the survivors incomplete. Danticat reinforces this idea of hopelessness when Amabelle travels to the border town of Ouanaminthe, looking for Father Romain, now a shadow of his former self, having been tortured in prison by his Dominican jailers, he no longer has any answers and can only mutter nationalistic stock phrases.

---

Miami whenever I'm here, and when I need it. For example, after the earthquake in Haiti, I just needed to be around people of faith, and the only thing that was going on at the time was a Catholic mass. I went to seek solace there. I have tried to continue in the faith of my childhood—the songs that I sang growing up; I like singing them in church. But I don't want to tell people, *Your* faith is bad. I don't want to be part of that aspect of faith. I feel like the essential has remained for me, in that, at the core of it, is God. I still believe, in spite, sometimes, of great evidence to the contrary, that there is compassion at the core of religion, and that we are all supposed to show one another as much compassion as we can.' (in Watchel, 2016, p. 34).

Violence has effectively silenced not just victims, but also those who could articulate their stories.

The rationale of common people towards grand events and figures is often enunciated through a reverse panopticon—a ground level scope that looks up to find answers, yet finds only the disappointment of inevitability. Although *The Farming of Bones* largely focuses on the view from the streets and the plantations, it also features flashes of ‘official history’. Walking the streets of Port-Au-Prince, Amabelle comes across a burning portrait of Haitian president Sténio Vincent and proceeds to describe it in detail:

He was a sophisticated-looking man, President Sténio Vincent, with small spectacles worn very close to his eyes. He had a pair of beautifully large ears framing his moon face, a tiny dot of a mustache over pinched pensive lips, a poet’s lips, it was said. In the photograph, he wore a gentleman’s collar with a bow tie, the end of which touched the shiny medal of the Grand Cross of the Juan Pablo Duarte Order of Merit, given to him by the Generalissimo as a symbol of eternal friendship between our two peoples. (1998: 236)

This small paragraph, itself a written portrait of a painted portrait, does not deal with the factual details of Vincent’s presidency (which lasted from the final period of the U.S. invasion in 1930 to the aftermath of the Parsley Massacre in 1941), instead it chooses to focus on small physical details that are used to delineate his perceived personality and his close relationship to Rafael Trujillo’s regime. This is the portrait of a reserved person who did not have the strength or audacity to respond to the Parsley Massacre with the required authority,<sup>83</sup> and he seems to deserve no more than the few lines Danticat dedicates to his diminished role in the crisis—especially compared to her

---

<sup>83</sup> His mild reply to the Parsley Massacre became the catalyst for protests in Port-au-Prince, which are portrayed by Danticat in *The Farming of Bones*. Eventually, most of the compensation paid by Trujillo would directly go into Sténio Vincent’s bank account and not to the victims. More on Vincent’s relationship to Trujillo and the United States can be found in Elizabeth Abbott’s *Haiti: A Shattered Nation*, pp. 60-68.

constant reference to Trujillo as an omnipresent character, almost symbolising his unofficial reign over the entire island of Hispaniola. Compare this image to another portrait, featured earlier in the book, of Trujillo:

Above Papi's head loomed a large portrait of the Generalissimo, which Señora Valencia had painted at her husband's request. Her painting was a vast improvement on many of the Generalissimo's public photographs. She had made him a giant in full military regalia, with vast fringed epaulets and clusters of medals aligned in neat rows under the saffron braiding across his chest. Behind him was the country's red and blue flag with the white cross in the middle, along with the coat of arms and the shield: DIOS, PATRIA, LIBERTAD. GOD, COUNTRY, LIBERTY. But the centrepiece was the Generalissimo himself, the stately expression on his oval face, his head of thick black hair (the beginning of gray streaks carefully omitted), his full vibrant locks swept back in gentle waves to frame the wide forehead, his coy gentle smile, and his eyes, which seemed oddly tender. Bedroom eyes, many had called them. (1998: 43)

The description of major figures as silent overseers, found only in two-dimensional, often askew artistic representations, always out of reach for common citizens, acts as another reinforcement of the author's allegiances to a *longue durée* historical approach. What Danticat implies in her description of these two portraits is that the images constructed by official figures and their actual personae were two separate identities. The airbrushing of history was, indeed, exercised by common people themselves (as in Valencia's biased painting), but always at the behest of a higher power (in this case, under her military husband's orders). Popular historiography, that is to say the elocution of events and figures by common people who may or may not be specialists, is expressed on two levels: the subservient pandering of official edicts written by bureaucrats and the urgent revaluation of silenced stories by survivors. Both levels, however, are deeply linked to the idea of power, the former reinforcing it with authority, the latter, attempting to subvert it through recognition.

One last conjecture of popular historiography is found in the final act, which serves as an epilogue to the book. Decades later, long after the disappearance of Sebastien and her failed attempt at a romantic relationship with Yves, and after the death of Rafael Trujillo in 1961, Amabelle travels back to Alegría, where she finds a self-conscious Valencia, surprised to find her alive but already leading her own life without remorse, a young Haitian maid by her side. Recognising that nothing binds them but distant memories of the past, they drive to the river and after briefly reminiscing, the young maid, herself part of a new generation unaware of history, asks for the significance of parsley in the massacre. Valencia duly answers:

“There are many stories and this is only one, I’ve heard that when the Generalissimo was a young man, he worked as a field guard in the cane fields. One day one of his Haitian workers escaped into a nearby field where many things were growing, among them, wheat and parsley. So the Generalissimo would not see him, the Haitian worker crawled through those fields to hide. After the Generalissimo grew tired of chasing him, he called out to the Haitian man, ‘If you tell me where you are, I’ll let you live, but if you make me find you, I’ll take your life’ [...] Your people did not trill their r the way we do, or pronounce the jota. ‘You can never hide as long as there is parsley nearby,’ the Generalissimo is believed to have said. On this island, you walk too far and people speak a different language. Their own words reveal who belongs on what side.” (1998: 304)

This passage, itself a summary of the Dominican Republic’s persecution of Haitian workers, serves to show how the image of Rafael Trujillo was less historical than mythical. Trujillo’s careful creation of a cult of personality was calculated not only to catapult his own ego, but also to exalt his superiority, to put himself and his power out of reach for the general population. In essence, Trujillo’s own narrative could only be decoded by the public sphere in terms of rumour, never becoming a palpable reality or remotely comparable to the everyday life of a normal Dominican citizen, and even less so in the case of a Haitian labourer. Earlier in the book, we find his name in newspapers, his voice on the radio, and his face decorating the walls of the house in

Alegría, but the person himself never materialises his presence unless it is done through myth.<sup>84</sup>

The painting of Trujillo hanging in the living room is a symbolic representation of his own mythical construction and how this pervaded most Dominican households of the time—an official, uncontested symbol of power through authority (being an example of military portraiture, it is also the representation of a traditionally European authority) articulated without contest or critique by common people. In Braudelian terms this would imply that myth operates between two different stages of historiography, being enacted in the short span but always with the aim of becoming perennial, indeed, the only antidote to the simplicity of myth seems to be the complexity of truth. It is precisely in the complexity of a *longue durée* approach where myth can be contested and reassessed. Its essentialist properties, explicitly seen in the simplification of prejudice enacted by the Trujillo regime which streamlined symbols to the point of placing fatal value on the trilling of an 'r', can be refuted by the counterargument that reality and history are anything but simple. The plurality of common stories and their specificities shown through fiction and through the recovery of oral testaments are diametrically opposed to the simplification of totemic myth, and as such, can be used to reconfigure the adulterated interstices of history. For Martinican writer and critic Edouard Glissant, 'myth prefigures history in an obscure way' (1992: 71) —it is the prelude to both writing and history, and it is by their committal to expunging the incongruities found within the myth-creation perpetuated

---

<sup>84</sup> Unlike most 'dictator novels' of the Latin American canon, most notably Sarmiento's *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism* or Roa Bastos' *I, The Supreme*, which place their emphasis in the characters of past dictators as a veiled method to castigate contemporary dictatorships.

by 'official history', that Danticat's and Díaz's stories find their symbolic power—however, both authors present slight differences in how they approach this demystification of history.

While Danticat treats Trujillo like an ever-present yet distant threat, Díaz constantly and explicitly castigates his depravities.<sup>85</sup> Both authors, however, seem to agree that Trujillo is but an incarnation of a much larger, pervading problem prevalent in histories shaped by colonialism. These involve connections and disconnections not only in Hispaniola but also in the very particular case of the Caribbean region. The understanding of the Caribbean as a chaotic domain in which individuals are constantly baffled by the complexity of their roots was investigated by Antonio Benítez-Rojo in his seminal book *The Repeating Island*, where he argued that the Caribbean as a concept transcended its geographical limits due to the fluidity of its inhabitants, and although the unpredictability of this fluid condition is difficult to pin down, these same complexities could bring about new liminal strategies of understanding by challenging the myths perpetuated by colonialism. However, Benítez-Rojo explicitly stated that this deconstruction (or rather, decolonisation, although this text precedes the terminology) of colonial myth could not be exercised through literature:

The most viable systems for this [challenge] are those that are articulated in the space of the religious Afro-European cult, that is to say, music, singing, dance and myth; certainly not writing. This is why the Caribbean text proposes to transcend its own fragmentation, and has to resort to these systems in search of ways that communicate to the reader its meta-language through intuition. This sort of meta-rhythm goes through the net laid out by the West; the colonizer's

---

<sup>85</sup> A comprehensive analysis of the ways that Yunió marginalises and parodies Trujillo while reconceptualising the whole concept of authoritarianism can be found in Jennifer Harford Vargas' essay 'Dictating a Zafa: The Power of Narrative Form as Ruin-Reading' found within *Junot Díaz and the Decolonial Imagination* (2016, pp. 201-230).

language that, with its deafening binary march, will always try to make these forms submit (Benítez-Rojo, 1997: 18).

The work of Díaz and Danticat proves that there are other methods of transcending fragmentation (which to Benítez-Rojo is a symbol of the region's own geographic divisions), namely by crafting new linguistic methods that do not submit to the norm, but rather destabilise pre-conceived notions of what colonial languages *read* and *sound* like; methods that are, in turn, heavily influenced instead of restricted by the fluidity of the Caribbean. This is a type of fluidity that, as this thesis will proceed to argue in the following chapter on language, can be articulated in fiction, but only if the author is well aware of the inherent colonality in the form itself and consciously proceeds to challenge it. A similar need to actively search for answers and the relationship between literature, history and myth is recognised by Glissant in his essay 'History and Literature', found in *Caribbean Discourse*:

We can be the victims of History when we submit passively to it—never managing to escape its harrowing power. History (like Literature) is capable of quarrying deep within us, as a consciousness or the emergence of a consciousness, as a neurosis (symptom of loss) and a contraction of the self. (1992: 84)

For Glissant, the Caribbean represented a site characterised by ruptures and dislocations brought by the slave trade, and as such, it was part of the Caribbean condition to question these links—a very similar point of view to that articulated by C.L.R. James' conception of Caribbean history as 'a series of uncoordinated periods of drift, punctured by spurts, leaps, and catastrophes' (2001: 9). While European history and philosophy revolved around self-serving notions of totality (which, in turn, influenced the current idea of an increasingly global consciousness), Caribbean history has been characterised by a 'dislocation of the continuum, and the inability of the



collective consciousness to absorb it full' (1992: 62), causing Glissant to describe Caribbean history with the term 'nonhistory'—a history based in the erasure of a collective memory and the impossibility of a single consciousness. This is exercised, for instance, when a minor historical event occurs in Guadeloupe, yet it won't have any repercussions in Martinique—the remnants of a 'divide and conquer' tactic employed by colonialism that is clearly challenged by an extraterritorial approach.

### **Towards an Extraterritorial History**

Glissant's definition of Caribbean history and the societies it encompasses as fragmented and dislocated could very well be applied to the lives and travails of migrants in any part of the world. Although the experiences of colonialism and slavery in the Caribbean are indeed particular, these experiences have become significantly more complicated and enriched by the development of new diasporas and the interconnected histories of those who form them—in the circumstance of this thesis, the focus lies on the relationship between Caribbean immigrants to the United States. The particular cases of Díaz and Danticat, second-generation immigrants who were brought to the United States as children, become prime examples of how history, not solely of three nations, but of a global dimension, continues to be enriched by the addition of new zones for articulation. In this sense, the cultural translocation and the ethical and economical conundrums their resulting shifts might pose can also be read with extra-literary scopes, by using, for instance, Immanuel Wallerstein's theory of World-Systems.

Drawing on the work of Fernand Braudel,<sup>86</sup> Wallerstein rejected the terminology associated with dividing the world into levels based upon economic divisions, showing instead the interconnectedness of capital and labour throughout history. His model serves to reject the idea of a single political centre, while dividing the global economy into three regions, even when these are not totally geographical: Core regions, typically found in developed countries where most of the economic power lies; periphery regions, where labour is often exploited to serve the Core regions; and semi-periphery regions made up of states that are located in between and benefit Core regions while benefiting from periphery regions. One of the main criticisms levelled at Wallerstein's theory is that it insufficiently deals with cultural transactions, placing too much emphasis on capital; this has, in recent years, been a catalyst for analyses such as Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters*, which redirects the World-Systems Theory to question the grotesquely unequal relationship of national literatures and languages in Core and periphery regions. According to Casanova's analysis, the current meritocracy of 'World Literature' as a severely flawed concept has its geographical roots in Paris—giving examples of several authors barely known in their own milieu who found validation from the French literary industry before becoming relevant in their homelands. Through historical examples and the assertive recognition of the inequalities inherent in the concept of 'World Literature', Casanova maps the power relations found in global literature and the institutions that legitimate what is Core-worthy and what should remain in the periphery. After exemplifying the condition of authors with a tenuous or downright radical approach to concepts of nation and literature, Casanova states: '...in trying to characterize a writer's work, one must situate

---

<sup>86</sup> To such extent that Wallerstein acted as the head of the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems and Civilization at Binghamton University for almost twenty-four years.

it with respect to two things: the place occupied by his native literary space within world literature and his own position within this space' (2004: 14), however Casanova limits her arguments to modernist, canonised writers (Yeats, Yacine, Beckett, Joyce), whose condition within nationalist discourses and their use of an extraterritorial language was indeed peculiar, yet dislocated from themes of race and gender unlike that of Díaz, Danticat, or most immigrant authors of the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Casanova identifies three major stages in the development of a 'world literary space' (2004: 47): Its genesis is traced to the mid-sixteenth century and the 'creation of modern literatures claiming to compete with the grandeur of ancient literatures' (2004: 48); the second to the late eighteenth century and the nineteenth century, as the concept of national languages consolidated the literature written in them; the third, Casanova remarks, is found in the processes of decolonisation that marked 'the entry into international competition of contestants who until then had been prevented from taking part' (2004: 48). The work of Díaz and Danticat, purely from a chronological order, would belong to this third stage, although Casanova significantly fails to identify the rise of writers who are not particularly interested in the competitive aspects of national literatures battling for recognition. However, creation, dissemination, and reception are three different phases of literary production, and the final two might not be quite as extraterritorial as the first.<sup>87</sup>

There is little doubt that the literature emanating from Haiti and the Dominican Republic, if placed under this scope, would belong to the periphery; one could even make a case for it belonging to a periphery of a periphery (that is exemplified in the

---

<sup>87</sup> More detailed analysis of the dissemination and reception of Díaz and Danticat's work and their 'market aesthetics' can be found in Chapter III, p. 206.

scarcity of writers and, indeed, readers in both countries). However, even though their place of birth and the substance of their ideas are entrenched in Hispaniola, Díaz and Danticat are still writing from the comforts and the facilities of global dissemination that only a Core country could provide, and they do this (at least superficially) in a Core language, supported by the large resources and significant marketing power of the East Coast U.S. literary industry. While it is clear that self-reflexivity is exercised by both authors (Hayden White and Paul Ricoeur's theories of forgetting without forgiving seem relevant to remember at this crossroads), constructing a new history of united Americanness<sup>88</sup> is not a conscious aim of their fiction, and perhaps the question itself is grander than their work: it is a complicated ethical matter of what the cultural ramifications are when the culture from so-called periphery countries develops in a Core nation such as the United States and, as such, deserves to be discussed on a much larger platform and through a comparative scope that features more types of migratory experiences.<sup>89</sup>

There is, however, a need to recognise the fact that both Díaz and Danticat have found a method to express their periphery history inside a Core environment—this is evident, precisely, in their constant questioning of power structures. A similar tactic for assuming the codes of power while working within them can be found in the theories of Jesuit scholar Michel De Certeau, specifically in his critique of colonial historiographical methods. Throughout his academic work, De Certeau attempted to transcend taxonomy by navigating in and through different platforms. His most famous work, *The Practice of*

---

<sup>88</sup> Which would presuppose a stern exercise in forgetfulness, not to mention a thorough review of the crimes committed from north to south. See: Mignolo, 2012 and Chapters II, p. 127 and Chapter III, p. 199.

<sup>89</sup> A conclusive argument that will be touched upon in this thesis' Epilogue, p. 225.

*Everyday Life* is now seen as a founding text in contemporary cultural studies, but it approaches ethnography through a cross-disciplinary approach that surpasses itself, much like in his other major, less known, work *The Writing of History*, a book which uses its title as a starting point, but misleadingly and ambiguously encompasses many other fields, closely related, but never explicitly referring to, the idea of extraterritorial fiction writing. De Certeau's central thesis in *The Writing of History* implies that writing builds history not only by describing events: the words themselves construct history, and as such, the mechanics and procedures behind this construction must be questioned before analysing the content itself. Extrapolating from this theory to literature, one could argue that Danticat's and Díaz's fiction operates in between those two junctures: they describe historical occurrences while creating history at the same time. However, they do so by assuming their position as subjects of this same history. This is not only related to the first level of restructuring history by filling the gaps left by tactical silence, but also to the awareness of the cultural complications of having to do so from a different geographic and linguistic setting. As De Certeau states, this procedure is not just a tool of theory, it organises the theory itself—a concept that is now accepted as part of historiography, and one which has always been taken for granted when debating fiction's relationship to reality.

Much like Braudel, De Certeau is severely critical of the power structures inherent in history creation. In the third section of the book, entitled 'Systems of Meaning: Speech and Writing', De Certeau uses the example of Jean de Léry to question the historian's relationship to its subject, and in turn, the liaisons between colonial thinking, religiousness and ethnography. De Léry, a Reformed pastor and writer born in France, travelled in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century with a group of Protestant missionaries to

Brazil, where they lived amongst the Tupí people for nearly a year. The resulting chronicle, *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil* is used by De Certeau as an example of colonial historiography and the methods with which it creates an unbalanced structure where the creator of history is, in many ways, absent from the subject. Earlier in *The Writing of History*, De Certeau even goes so far as to use the New World itself as a metaphor for Eurocentric fiction. He writes:

But what is really initiated here is a colonization of the body by the discourse of power. This is writing that conquers. It will use the New World as if it were a blank, 'savage' page on which Western desire will be written. It will transform the space of the other into a field of expansion for a system of production. From the moment of a rupture between a subject and an object of the operation, between a will to write and a written body (or a body to be written), this writing fabricates Western history. (1992: 26)

The manufacturing of history through imposed methods is a recurring theme in both Danticat and Díaz, and, as shown throughout this chapter, the absences and silences left by these methods open up spaces for the repressed to express themselves. Much like Braudel and Trouillot, De Certeau recognises this by uncovering the use of documents as methods of historical construction—these documents, isolated, carefully chosen to separate the present from the past, leave room for a return to examine that which remains unwritten. This is often found, by methods of close ethnography, in oral history; for instance, in the creation and propagation of sayings: 'A saying arrests what is said—it is the erasure of writing—and forces it to extend its production; it generates writing' (1992: 236). When referring to the sayings of the Tupí tribes of Brazil, De Certeau notes:

They metaphorized the dominant order: they made it function in another register. They remained other within the system which they assimilated and which assimilated them externally. They diverted it without leaving it.

Procedures of consumption maintained their difference in the very space that the occupier was organizing. (1992: 261)

And it is here, in 'diverting without leaving' where extraterritorial writing can gain its own influence. Up to this point, I have attempted to describe methods of historiography found in Danticat's and Díaz's work, but it is also crucial to note *how* these methods are articulated outside of the text and from what position they are produced and read in their final form. How their geographies, intimate as they might be, are no more than reconstructions of a reality with which they are deeply familiar, yet one which they do not inhabit in present time. This method of assimilation is, indeed, deeply linked to Braudel's theory of *longue durée*—by assuming their position as conduits of a larger story, Díaz and Danticat agree that history should be seen as a long-term concept. They further reinforce this nexus by looking upon common people (the same level of perspective which their personal genealogy belongs to) as the main articulators of history, instead of exalting grand figures and leaders. Yet their condition as fiction authors do not necessarily tie them to the principles of historical materialism, giving them the ability to both look for patterns, but also depict and elaborate on particular moments in time.<sup>90</sup>

Applying the theory of *longue durée* to the Dominican Republic and Haiti inevitably leads us to talk about Hispaniola as a sole entity—although history shows

---

<sup>90</sup> In his essay 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1940), Walter Benjamin famously critiques the type of historical materialism that is concerned with predicting the future by depicting the patterns of the past (Thesis XVI). However, he also states that 'to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was.' It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger' (Thesis VI) and that 'the chronicler, who recounts events without distinguishing between the great and small, thereby accounts for the truth, that nothing which has ever happened is to be given as lost to history.' (Thesis III) Both points of view that could be applied to Díaz, Danticat, and their characters.

how both sides of the island have been divided and the economic and political power of both have shifted, they are inevitably linked to each other—Danticat expresses this often unequal but never detached relationship through the culturally fluid character of Amabelle Desir in *The Farming of Bones*. The lives of these characters are closely related to the major events that have marked the history of Hispaniola—not just to immediate events, but also to the tacit presence of historical developments from the Spanish conquest to the Haitian Revolution. The complications found in Hispaniola and its history are many—it is a story of colonialism, of violence, of slavery, revolt and invasions; yet, even from the arrival of Taíno tribes, the history of Hispaniola was never isolated in the geographic confines of the island itself, but has also been articulated elsewhere—decisions, intrusions and, in the case of Díaz and Danticat's fiction, re-evaluations that have been accomplished in and from other countries. The crucial difference, however, is that Díaz and Danticat do this both conscious and critical of colonial frameworks: their historiography is self-performed, and as such, presents a view from inside accomplished outside, instead of the exclusively external colonial chronicles of the past.

Looking at personal history in the long term can serve, therefore, as a method of power re-distribution. As Trouillot argues, there is a significant amount of control in historiographical creation, not only in the subjective ordering of facts, but crucially, in that which is left unsaid. Díaz performs this through the exposition of trauma and violence in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Dominican Republic—in essence, his theory disputes that, even within systems of violent oppression and torture, the resilience and survival of Dominicans, many of whom make up the Dominican diaspora in the United States, is part of the cultural heritage of anyone descending from a country that has been witness



to colonial processes, and can be used as a method to question ‘official history’, even when the inquiry might inevitably lead to that very same path of violence. This deconstruction of the past is born out of sheer curiosity, and in turn begets a conscious need to complete silenced history. As Hayden White argued, history, as much as remembering, is also about forgetting—and memory is more dependent on emotions than facts. Part of articulating history in the present is to find a manner of forgetting (though not forgiving) to accompany theories of memory. In a way, this is equated by Díaz to the act of migration as a method of forgetting—in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, Belicia Cabral flees the Dominican Republic and refuses to narrate her traumatic history to her children, yet this history is ultimately bequeathed to the reader by Yunior, an external translator-narrator whose links to the Cabral family are intimate, yet still autonomous, enriching the value of the text as a whole.

Instead of taking a cross-generational approach, and perhaps because she is a much more prolific author than Díaz, Danticat spreads her long term reading of Haiti through her work, using *The Farming of Bones* in particular to dissect the common person’s view of a single event (The Parsley Massacre) although, subtly, it transcends the particularities of a single episode and could very well be transported to the lives of current day Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic. Her theory, too, is related to resilience and survival, and questions the uneven relationship of power between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. The value of mourning and the aftermath of violence are two core themes in the book and these produce the creation of history through a craving for justice—this justice, she argues, can only be found through the remembrance of those left behind. Díaz makes one of his main characters migrate to forget; in Danticat’s case, her main character’s migration only exacerbates the need to

prove the existence of the past, done through the naming of the dead and the recounting of their stories. Another valuable insight in both novels is the distancing of everyday people from the major figures who shape their lives—like Díaz, Danticat emphasises the self-mythification of Rafael Trujillo as a method of control. Myth and its creation can be related to history from different perspectives—what extraterritorial literature helps to do is to show the cracks in myth creation, and question the ways in which official history establishes itself as the norm.

Looking at the connections between Hispaniola and the Caribbean, we can turn back to Edouard Glissant, who proposed the idea of the Caribbean as a site of ‘non history’—a zone where the slave trade and colonialism created dislocation and a series of ruptures. This could be construed as a method of oppression and an obstacle to creating a ‘communal memory’, but I argue that these very same gaps are the ones exploited by Díaz and Danticat to articulate their critique of colonialism. The dislocation and rupture inherent in migratory experiences can, too, serve as a platform from which the injustices of the past can be re-evaluated; whether or not this devolves into communal action or stays as a standalone expression, remains to be seen.<sup>91</sup> There is perhaps, an intersectional approach to extraterritorial literature that comprises all of these experiences into a distinct articulation of history, but this, as yet, has not filtered down into a singular significant literary movement. This relationship between individual creation, distanced perspectives and the inter-regional divisions of labour (in this case literary creation) can also be put into question by using Wallerstein’s

---

<sup>91</sup> The elocution of political action through diasporic networks and Stuart Hall’s concept of ‘difference’—which often derives from the very same limitations placed by the status quo that repress members of a determined diaspora, are analysed in Chapter III, p. 213.

World-Systems Theory. The work of Díaz and Danticat should not be excluded from the ethics of creating a literature from afar and the links that define how their work becomes part of an international system of production must always be put into question. Part of this problematic is their decision to translate their historiography to operate from a different linguistic scope<sup>92</sup>, yet, as De Certeau shows, there are tactics employed primarily from positions of power inequality which can operate both inside and outside the system—the basic acknowledgement of gaps left by the subjective construction of history can be the starting point of a method to work within a system while diverting it. Relating history creation to language, a further parallel can be drawn in De Certeau's description of writing as opposed to speech:

...to writing, which invades space and capitalizes on time, is opposed speech, which neither travels very far nor preserves much of anything. In its first aspect, speech never leaves the place of production. In other words, the signified cannot be detached from the individual or collective body. (1992: 216)

So the traveling done by Díaz and Danticat is not just physical, it is also portrayed in the fact that their preferred method of expression is one of transience through writing. Books, like written thought, are free to leave their place of production and even engage in different translations, and by doing so, reject any concept of belonging. It is through the re-assessment of history that extraterritorial literature differs from globalisation. By questioning and reaffirming the existing whys and hows of culture, extraterritorial authors avoid having their culture become homogenised into a formless argument, even when its fundamental themes might be universal. In terms of historiographical creation, what extraterritorial literature should place at the centre of its values is the questioning of power through the exposition of its roots and the refusal

---

<sup>92</sup> See: Chapter II.

to assume history as a complete notion, never estranged from the fact that this is done within the parameters of fiction. As Walter Benjamin wrote, borrowing from a phrase by Leopold Von Ranke:

To articulate the past historically does not mean recognizing it 'the way it really was' (Ranke). It means appropriating a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger. [...] The only historian capable of fanning the spark of hope in the past is the one who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he is victorious. And this enemy has never ceased to be victorious. (Benjamin in Clarke and Thomas, 2016, 55)

As befits the redressing of past injustices, the depiction of the silenced paths of history should always be approached with a determined sense of urgency. Immigrant authors have the unique characteristic of being able to reconstruct, from shards of information and seas of silence, the history of their own family and their native countries from a different platform—and this should be taken as a privilege and an opportunity to put history on constant trial. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot wrote 'The ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility; the ultimate challenge, the exposition of its roots.' (1995, 9) and, as all works of an extraterritorial vein should, the fiction of Díaz and Danticat thoroughly embody the quest for engaging with the stifled past and illuminating the tragic complexities of the present by exposing the seldom seen growth rings of history in Hispaniola and the Caribbean.

As De Certeau argued, the content of historiography is dependent on instruments that must be discerned before following this quest for elucidation. This is why before drawing any conclusions on the possibilities of an extraterritorial historiography or the challenging of myth, we must first pay attention to the tools which are used to construct it: as Benítez-Rojo hinted, the rhythms of language in the Caribbean are enacted, in the purest sense, within colonial impositions. But instead of

considering this as a hurdle in the elocution of a linear history, I would contend that Danticat and Díaz use new linguistic systems of expression as tactics of resistance—a method akin to the reconstruction of silenced history from which new strategies of narrative power redistribution can be devised. This is why any method that aims to evaluate Díaz's and Danticat's work must be first aware of their historical context and only then proceed on to analysing the central role played by language in their corpus.

## Chapter II: Language

‘Language is my human effort. My destiny is to search and my destiny is to return empty-handed. But I return with the unsayable. The unsayable can only be given to me through the failure of my language. Only when the construction fails, can I obtain what it could not achieve.’

Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.* (1964)

### Vessels of Speech:

#### The Extraterritorial Language of Edwidge Danticat and Junot Díaz

‘I have only one language—it is not mine’ (2001: 2), repeats Jacques Derrida in a speech titled *Monolingualism of the Other or The Prosthesis of Origin* as a sort of mantra scattered throughout the text. He refers to his own upbringing in occupied Algiers and El-Biar, growing up a Sephardic Jew and being expelled from school for a whole academic year by the Vichy government’s imposed restrictions. His personal experience shapes the argument that both citizenship and language are fragile concepts that an individual can be dispossessed of at any point in his or her life. But one could also choose to interpret this phrase factually as an extraterritorial dictum. Languages, those inherited and those learned, are the primary instruments through which authors construct their narratives. Therefore, in the case of immigrants and multilingual authors, the choice of working with a determined Core language represents an issue loaded with political and cultural significance.

The linguistic affiliations (or lack of) exercised by immigrant authors could be construed to be an indication of a contemporary fluid condition, far from the parochialisms of constrained national literature. These methods of expression, which

often include the blending of two or more cultures, are the material result of an author's physical position, of his or her ability to cross national boundaries, and the cultural translation that results from those travels.<sup>93</sup> However, the architecture of narrative can be built not only from a necessity to translate, but also from a total lack of articulation, and it is crucial for any literary analysis to begin by taking a step back from literature itself and view the work of contemporary immigrant authors within the context of societies at large. It is reductive to speak of literature as being post-national, cosmopolitan, or globalised in a world where not only intellectual walls remain unchallenged but also tangible fences, the kind built by governments and intolerance, are still being erected.

These divisions exist, for instance, in the island of Hispaniola, in which the barrier between the Dominican Republic and Haiti is not twenty-five feet high yet it cuts across time, culture and heritage. Be it through their divergent colonial processes, their respective interactions with their colonisers, the brutality of their past concurrent dictatorships, or the current bigotry of Dominican migration laws: the shared history of the island is marked by demarcation and constant discrimination. It is an abusive relationship perpetuated today by politicians and the establishment, lightly criticised

---

<sup>93</sup> A broader look at the work of contemporary authors who exercise their own cultural and linguistic translations within their works can be found in Rebecca L. Walkowitz's *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature*. This study includes a brief look at Díaz's work, separating his language into two modes: 'internal multilingualism' (the varieties of expression within English and Spanish) and 'external multilingualism' (the movement between English and Spanish). Analysing his short story 'Pura', Walkowitz argues: 'Díaz's story performs a kind of reverse assimilation. Instead of translating Dominican speech into a standardised version of the English language, Díaz asks readers comfortable with standardised English to acquire Dominican [...] but he does more than this. He makes a new standard. He presents Spanish words as part of New Jersey's native language.' (124).

by international organisations, and sparsely scrutinised in the global public sphere by writers, academics, artists and social workers. Ultimately, these historical hierarchies of prejudice (white/black/Dominican/Haitian) represent subjective methods of categorisation through which racism and nationalism are nurtured and established—the same reductive labelling which extraterritorial literature incessantly challenges.

This chapter will explore the linguistic methods that Edwidge Danticat and Junot Díaz use in their written work, constantly reassembling the very threads of the fabric they are working with and eluding classification in the process. Using Díaz's novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* and an array of Danticat's fiction and non-fiction output, the goal of this chapter is to analyse the uses of language in both authors and their interaction with theories of translation and decolonisation with the final aim of identifying the approaches that extraterritorial authors use to deconstruct categories while creating fluid narratives.

The previous chapter attempted to chart a brief history of Hispaniola and the silencing embedded in the historiography built around it, but it is important to recall that the history of language in the island, overlapping with and often resistant to objective fact, should be viewed as a manifestation not solely of the result of years of multicultural mingling amongst its inhabitants, but also of their uneven interactions of power. The choice to start an analysis by charting the spread of the Taíno language (itself foreign, elusive and poorly attested)<sup>94</sup> could appear to be an opaque foundation, but the Taíno language's dissolution and subsequent erasure by European colonisers

---

<sup>94</sup> See: Chapter I, page 48.



succinctly portrays the miscommunication and silencing always at odds with two preponderant features of linguistic development: creativity and amalgamation.

The imposition of geographical divisions in both sides of Hispaniola carried with it an alternation of French and Spanish as *lingua franca* (though other Indo-European languages were also spoken), but it was the addition of African languages brought by slavery and their resulting creole mixtures that show the clearest examples of Caribbean multiculturalism, always on the margins of the status quo and its Eurocentric bureaucratic codes. Indeed, the formation of new languages is still a feature of contemporary Hispaniola, as shown by examples such as the recent emergence of ‘Kreñòl’.<sup>95</sup> Bearing in mind the complex linguistic history of Hispaniola and the Caribbean, this chapter will predominantly focus on extraterritorial language—that is to say, a type of language that subverts standardised versions of core European languages (in this specific case English, Spanish and French) by inoculating them with argot, metaphor and hyper-textual references.

For there is, too, another Hispaniola, one that exists outside its geographical boundaries, occasionally in Montreal, sometimes in New York, often in the middle of a flight from Port-au-Prince or Santo Domingo to Miami. This idea of an island which exists not merely in geographical terms but also in the culture of the diaspora is perfectly exemplified in the concept of extraterritorial literature: a literature full of stories produced in flux, travelling between two or more cultures and languages,

---

<sup>95</sup> See Lady Carolina Tavárez Varela’s essay ‘Kreñòl: A new language in the Hispaniola?’, which uses first-hand research derived from four rural bi-national public markets to examine how linguistic barriers affect social and economic relations between Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

lacking a fixed identity and constantly questioning an elusive sense of belonging—represented by the work of Danticat and Díaz: two authors with roots in Hispaniola who live in the United States but construct their literature in-between. Their stories transcend the figure of intellectual exile to create a style that is neither devoted to the nostalgia of the émigré nor to the conscious displacement of the world-weary cosmopolitan. These are stories that, unlike those of a significant number of members of the diaspora, are able to travel freely between the island and its northern neighbour, creating bridges between a perplexing present and an obscured past.

To contemplate Haiti or the Dominican Republic one must also consider the complexity of the geographically determined history of the region. Far from detaching themselves from the Caribbean, both Danticat and Díaz see their work as the continuation of a tradition that has multiculturalism at its very core—that of Antillean art, which Derek Walcott once described as ‘the restoration of our shattered histories.’ (1993: 66) Indeed, if there is a unifying concept of what it means to be born in the Caribbean it is that of virtual rootlessness. Stuart Hall, a scholar who firmly believed in the positive power of a diverse society, saw the Caribbean as ‘a kind of a test bed of whether one can live without an origin to go back to.’ (1996: 34) This sentiment is echoed by resolutely cosmopolitan author Dany Lafèrrière, who believes that being born on an island represents ‘an endless call toward the elsewhere.’ (in Munro, 2010: 3) This notion of fluidity with regard to identity and belonging is crucial when applied to experimentation in fiction and beyond: Díaz and Danticat are incessantly concerned with the impossibility of a complete sense of belonging, and therefore, the impossibility of linguistic affiliation, crafting instead a linguistic form that transcends Core languages and strives towards the extraterritorial, as will be shown throughout this chapter.

## Transcending the Extraterritorial

In debates of a linguistic vein, the term extraterritorial is most closely associated with the work of George Steiner, specifically his 1972 collection of essays *Extraterritorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution*. Steiner's views on linguistics and the transcendence of verbal and textual communication are themselves intrinsically influenced by his personal responses to the Holocaust. Born to a bourgeois Viennese Jewish household in Paris, his family moved to New York City days before the Nazi occupation of France, leaving him to feel like a kind of survivor, reflecting the title of his brief autobiographical essay from 1965. This sense of self-aware exclusion from extreme strife and the parallels between linguistic elocution and survival are pervasive through his work. Steiner's interpretations of language are always marked by the dramatic contradiction between enlightened creation and barbaric destruction—and the appalling realisation that these are not necessarily exclusive concepts. As he remarked in his 1967 book *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman*: 'To speak of the unspeakable is to risk the survivance of language as creator and bearer of humane, rational truth. Words that are saturated with lies or atrocity do not easily resume life' (1967: 123).

His concept of trauma is one of radical in-articulation. Using the crimes of the Third Reich as the central nexus for his theories, Steiner's analysis of authoritarian language (and the fiction which attempted to reconstruct it) centred on the impossibility of proper enunciation. He considers the trajectory of destruction left by the Nazi regime to have resulted not just in dire material consequences, but as having had a devastating impact in the linguistic sphere. Steiner argues that during the years of

the Nazi regime, language itself was altered and then obliterated to the point where it no longer embodied its supposedly original purpose of channelling logic—and this resulted in the subsequent impossibility of finding the right words to describe the Holocaust's full impact afterwards.<sup>96</sup> For Steiner, the thorough savagery of the Third Reich was impossible to fully translate into language not only in the present but also from a historiographical perspective: 'Everything forgets. But not language. When it has been injected with falsehood, only the most drastic truth can cleanse it. Instead, the post-war history of the German language has been one of dissimulation and deliberate forgetting' (1967: 109).

Elsewhere in this dissertation,<sup>97</sup> I have attempted to draw parallels between silences and linguistic reconstruction through the recognition of deliberately silenced history. And while Steiner's critique of European forgetfulness is a product of his time, it fails to recognise the fact that the sheer acknowledgment of the existence of these silences is, in itself, a constructive use of language. This acquiescence might be equated to a certain kind of complicity, as Saul Friedlander pointed out in his critique of Steiner: 'to reduce Auschwitz to silence is to participate in another dissimulation and erasure of history' (in Leventhal, R. S., 2004). There lies the difference between silence and silencing, the function of power in producing and erasing, which must be constantly

---

<sup>96</sup> 'Languages have great reserves of life. They can absorb masses of hysteria, illiteracy and cheapness [...] But there comes a breaking point. Use a language to conceive, organize, and justify Belsen; use it to make out specifications for gas ovens; use it to dehumanize man during twelve years of calculated bestiality. Something will happen to it. [...] Something will happen to the words. Something of the lies and sadism will settle in the marrow of the language. Imperceptibly at first, like the poisons of radiation sifting silently into the bone. But the cancer will begin, and the deep-set destruction. The language will no longer grow and freshen. It will no longer perform, quite as well as it used to, its two principal functions: the conveyance of humane order which we call law, and the communication of the quick of the human spirit which we call grace.' (1967: 101).

<sup>97</sup> Chapter I, p. 56.

challenged instead of looked at with resignation. Friedlander argues that Steiner's foibles are rooted in the universalisation of his arguments<sup>98</sup>—such as the failure to discern the annihilation of specifically German language from language as a whole. Indeed, the attempt to produce omniscient arguments is a distinction of Steiner's own Eurocentric background, and these arguments need to be questioned and updated. The theories found in *Extraterritorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution* derive most of their theoretical framework from classical, renaissance and modern European philosophy and this knowingly limited approach, which is always aware of its own faults while revelling in them, constitutes, as Stuart Hall pointed out:

...a deeply tragic vision that touches on the dark side of the European enlightenment, and sees anti-semitism [sic] arising from within the very greatness he's celebrating [...] But you have to have assumed that European high culture was the culmination of humanity to have been so profoundly shocked, even destroyed, by that darkness; because if you took a sighting of Europe from outside, the story you would see is one of expansion and colonisation over centuries. You don't see that if you dwell within the limits of Greek poetry and Renaissance art. (Hall in Jaggi, 2001)

This lack of a decolonising outlook might result in the merits of Steiner's work not being wholly in tune with contemporary thought, but it is arguable, at least, that his ideas were nevertheless a step in the right direction in what was at the time a significantly more conservative academic atmosphere. By recognising the parallels, rather than extreme dichotomy, between civility and brutality, he de-romanticised the established view of high art as the mark of decency. That revelation, in itself, constituted an innovative awareness that resulted in a healthy scepticism towards the uses of language. Steiner saw this scepticism reflected in the work of the writers he would deem 'extraterritorial', using Beckett, Nabokov and Borges as case studies, he

---

<sup>98</sup> Friedländer, in turn, argued for psycho-analytical self-reflexivity, attempting to elucidate the denial and disavowal of certain discourses regarding the Holocaust. See: *Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death*.

often spoke of the hermeneutic possibilities that sprang from the emergence of these so-called writers of exile. According to Steiner, their linguistic experimentation (which was, as he termed it, part of a 'linguistic revolution') was born out of a reaction to the 'lack of centre' found in post-war Europe. This was a context in which most of the possibilities of establishing new uses of language were related to acts of what he called 'the most generous and productive form of cultural understanding' (1972: 39), that is to say: *translation*.

Like Walter Benjamin before him and Lawrence Venuti<sup>99</sup> after him, Steiner is manifestly preoccupied by the inner workings of translation and untranslatability. In his essay 'The Hermeneutic Motion', Steiner defines the procedure of a translator in four different stages, trust, aggression, embodiment, and restitution<sup>100</sup>: Trust in that which deserves to be transferred; aggression in the transgressive act of appropriation; embodiment, in the position the translated text will occupy; and restitution as the final restoration of balance between the original and the translated text.<sup>101</sup> These four stages, and most of Steiner's theories on translation, are heavily influenced by Roman Jakobson's semiotic approach of dividing the interpretation of language into intralingual (the act of drawing equivalences and replacing words in one language),

---

<sup>99</sup> Venuti's theories of foreignisation and domestication will be touched upon later in this Chapter, p. 155.

<sup>100</sup> Found in the edited volume *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, 1998.

<sup>101</sup> These theories were not necessarily innovative by the time Steiner committed them to paper. They had been recurrent preoccupations of German philosophy, analysed most famously by Friedrich Schleiermacher during the Enlightenment and Walter Benjamin in the inter-war period. See: Laurence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, specifically the first chapter 'Invisibility' (pp. 1-43) for added context.

interlingual (the transportation of words between languages) and intersemiotic (when the emphasis shifts from finding the exact words to conveying information).

In the specific case of Junot Díaz's and Edwidge Danticat's work, these stages and separations are recognisable yet constantly contested, diversified and incorporated. In their novels and short stories, a single sentence can often exemplify two or more modalities of translation—from intersemiotic narratives of trauma in Danticat to multimodal uses of un-italicised replacement words from Spanish to English in Díaz. Therefore, as exemplified by these two authors, contemporary extraterritorial literature (going beyond Steiner's limited definition of unhoused authors searching for an inexpressible centre) carries within it a multiplicity of translations that, rather than remaining static and attached to a particular mode or stage, are in constant travel, amalgamating languages and probing misconceptions of history as a stand-alone national concept. Bearing those ideas in mind, the following analyses of Díaz and Danticat's work will explore their potential as translators and pay special attention to four distinct (often dialectic) focal points: Interlingual and intralingual; linguistic decolonisation; communicative and symbolic language; and domestication versus foreignisation.

#### **Yunior as Saint Jerome:**

#### **Methods of Translation in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao***

Unlike Danticat, whose devotion to truthfulness often results in her use of a clear, unambiguous language for the sake of immediacy, Díaz can be more incisive and challenging to the monolingual reader. His language is knowingly decentred: it includes a core of colloquial English with a recurrence of untranslated, un-italicised phrases in

Spanish and a vast array of cultural references that range from classic science fiction literature to video games and wrestling moves. This cross-linguistic, referential approach becomes part of *Oscar Wao*'s idiosyncrasy, and acts as a statement of intent which, at times, becomes a contained, self-sufficient tool aimed at disorienting those without the additional knowledge and rewarding those with it—leaving the monolingual reader with a feeling of being 'outside' the text that mimics the experience of an immigrant dealing with the codes of a new culture and a new language. Referring to the limits of expression found in common languages, Díaz has said: 'The problem tends not to be whether English or Spanish is capable, but whether language is capable.' (2012) For Díaz, the expansion and amalgamation of languages represents the only possible way of merging Dominican history with diasporic experiences in the United States. He explains:

For me, allowing the Spanish to exist in my text without the benefit of italics or quotations marks a very important political move. Spanish is not a minority language. Not in this hemisphere, not in the United States, not in the world inside my head. So why treat it like one? Why 'other' it? Why de-normalize it? By keeping Spanish as normative in a predominantly English text, I wanted to remind readers of the mutability of languages. And to mark how steadily English is transforming Spanish and Spanish is transforming English. (Díaz in Chi'en, 2003: 204)

These 'normalising' uses of one language interfering, or rather, streaming into another are often a reflection on the train of thought of bilingual speakers. When English words do not sufficiently represent the intended meaning of a discussion, Spanish interjections are applied to the text. These are often found in *Oscar Wao* when the dialogue itself becomes heated or emphasised, and are frequently expressed by older characters, for whom English is not the default method of communication. In the first chapter, this is seen in the scolding given by Oscar's mother Beli to her son:



What's wrong with you? His mother asked [...] When Oscar whimpered, Girls, Moms de León nearly exploded. Tú ta llorando por una muchacha? She hauled Oscar to his feet by his ear.

Mami, stop it, his sister cried, stop it!

She threw him to the floor. Dale un galletazo, she panted, then see if the little puta respects you. (2007: 15)

Placing this approach into the context of Steiner's 'hermeneutic motion', Díaz's insistence on normalising code-switching to reflect contemporary language in the United States is, in itself, a political decision that is based on trust—trust that this is, in fact, the way the Dominican diaspora, seldom portrayed in mainstream fiction, communicate every day in New Jersey. This trust is also driven by a transgressive act—the act of deconstructing the misconception of English or Spanish as standardised or canonical single entities by reconciling their differences and introducing a plethora of colloquial terminology; and results in the embodiment and restitution of a new extraterritorial language, now committed to the page, though still restless and open to new inoculations of layered meta-text and external references. In the specific case of this excerpt, it should be noted, colloquial words carry a significant misogynistic charge—words which would inevitably render the text all the more brutal for a monolingual reader were they not left untranslated, and words which, spoken by a female character, represent the insidious inoculation of chauvinistic discourse in Latin American culture and the resulting plague of violence against women (which, ironically, this same female character is subjected to on more than one occasion throughout the novel).

Díaz's technique, therefore, does not limit itself to finding replacement words in another language for the sake of lexical diversity—these additions are rooted in the

belief that a single standardised language would not represent a genuine reflection of the primary subjects at hand, making most processes of translation found in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* thoroughly intralingual. Its aims are not to transport or make one worldview more understandable to another; rather, the novel strives to represent the inner unrest and richness of the extraterritorial experience, marked by the co-mingling of two or more methods of communication in one cognisance. A monolingual reader seeking an interlingual translation of what the diasporic Dominican experience would resemble in a different context is therefore forced to immerse him or herself in the worldview of bilingualism,<sup>102</sup> to deduce the meaning of singular words, or embark on further research to find their exact definition with the aid of dictionaries (both colloquial and formal). An exception to this is the Faber & Faber edition of the novel, which includes an added glossary designed specifically for the British market—a decision taken by the publisher that only creates a layer of ‘otherness’ with an unhealthy dose of exoticism.

However, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* as a text has also been engaged in more traditional interlingual translations, starting with the translation of its Spanish version. The material position of Díaz’s books in Ibero-American shelves frequently places him under the banner of Latin American literature, yet his texts have had to be transported to the Spanish language, under his supervision, by external translators (most notably Achy Obejas and Eduardo Lago),<sup>103</sup> with a clear aim to preserve Spanish-

---

<sup>102</sup> A closer reading of the code-switching strategies used by Díaz and other Latino writers can be found in Lourdes Torres’ essay ‘In the contact zone: code-switching strategies of Latino writers’, 2007, pp. 75-96.

<sup>103</sup> A thorough analysis of Spanish translations of *Oscar Wao* can be found in Michael Boyden and Patrick Goethals’ essay ‘Translating the Watcher’s Voice: Junot Díaz’s *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* into Spanish’ (2011).

Caribbean idiosyncrasies while remaining accessible to a broader public. Instead of opting for a mirrored translation, which would perhaps complicate matters by switching all Spanish words to English, the conscious decision, one must assume verified by Díaz, is to omit certain words for the sake of immediacy, often resulting in a sense-for-sense rather than a word-for-word translation, as shown in this sentence of the first chapter:

Maritza was allowed over their house and Olga was not. (A puertorican over here? His mother scoffed. Jamás!) His logic as close to the yes/no math of insects as a nigger could get. (2007: 15)

Maritza podía venir a su casa y Olga no (¿Una puertorriqueña aquí?, su madre decía con desdén. ¡Jamás!). Su lógica matemática, como la de los insectos, era de sí o no. (2008: 25)

Other than the peculiar suppression of the inverted exclamation point in the original, what stands out is the absence of colloquial nouns<sup>104</sup> in favour of general descriptions that would not tinge the narrative with localised language. This catering to a larger audience or the quest for accessibility over the general flow of stylistic turns is not particularly evident in the slant of the original text. It is important to note that, in the original version, these same nouns and colloquialisms are crucial in creating a sense of familiarity between the text and the reader. The registers portrayed in *Oscar Wao* are rooted in spoken (rather than purely literary or poetic) language. However, the range of resources employed by Yunior de las Casas, the chief narrator of the novel, often place him as a historian, an author, but also as a code-switching translator.<sup>105</sup> In 2013, Díaz

---

<sup>104</sup> In this case the crucial word ‘nigger’, which immediately places the narrator in line with African-American slang and all the racial/political connotations the word carries with it.

<sup>105</sup> An interesting analysis of the progression of the character of Yunior and the idiosyncrasies unique to his position as a bilingual immigrant narrator has been sketched by Laura Fennell in her MA thesis 'Across Borders: Migrancy, Bilingualism

collaborated with the website Poetry Genius to annotate one of the many footnotes spread throughout Oscar Wao, a passage told from the point of view of Yunior:

32. Those of you who know the Island (or are familiar with Kinito Méndez's oeuvre) know exactly the landscape I'm talking about. These are not the campos that your folks rattle on about. These are not the guanábana campos of our dreams. Outer Azua is one of the poorest areas in the DR; it is a wasteland, our own homegrown sertão, resembled the irradiated terrains from those end-of-the-world scenarios that Oscar loved so much — Outer Azua was the Outlands, the Badlands, the Cursed Earth, the Forbidden Zone, the Great Waste, the Plains of Glass, the Burning Lands, the Doben-al, it was Salusa Secundus, it was Ceti Alpha Five, it was Tatooine. Even the residents could have passed for survivors of some not-so-distant holocaust. (2008: 256)

This paragraph shows a clear example of Díaz's rich cross-referentiality techniques and the use of multi-layered allusion—the reader can choose to circumvent this paragraph and move on, or dwell on every reference to expose its full meaning. Kinito Méndez, for instance, is a Dominican merengue singer popular in his country and amongst the diaspora, but in other parts of Latin America he is merely known as a one-hit wonder thanks to his song 'Cachamba'. What Díaz achieves with this passing reference is to establish a connection with those readers familiar with Méndez's music while seemingly excluding those without the knowledge.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, the narrator Yunior is talking directly at second-generation Dominican immigrants with the phrase 'these are not the campos that your folks rattle on about'—the rose-tinted nostalgia

---

and the Reconfiguration of Post-colonialism in Junot Diaz's Fiction', 2015, Lund University.

<sup>106</sup> Díaz knowingly toys with his potential readerships on many other occasions, as María del Pilar Blanco pointed out in her essay 'Reading the Novum World: The Literary Geography of Science Fiction in Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*': 'One such moment of complicity between the narrator and the academic reader occurs in the episode in which Oscar is beaten by the police captain's cronies. Yunior describes the scene as being 'like one of those nightmare eight-a.m. MLA panels: endless' (299). The reference to the Modern Language Association annual conventions may not translate to all readers of the novel, but assures a knowing nod from a specialised arts and humanities contingent' (2013: 50).

passed on from parents to children is ejected in favour of a realistic description of Azua, a province of the Dominican Republic that is as barren as the sertão region of Brazil. A further method of inclusion and exclusion follows; for those readers unaware of the geographical properties of the sertão, Díaz references the film *Zardoz*, Roger Zelazny's post-apocalyptic novel *Damnation Alley*, the British comic book Judge Dredd, *Planet of the Apes*, the board game *Dungeons and Dragons*, the role-playing game *Tékumel*, the young-adult novel series *Sword of the Spirits*, the role-playing game *Skyrealms of Jorune*, Frank Herbert's novel *Dune*, and the multi-media franchises *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* all in the space of one sentence. The goal of this paragraph could be construed as merely descriptive, but it is, in fact, a metalinguistic approach that fortifies the bond between the narrative voice and the recipient while, at the same time, creating a detailed depiction of a particular zone of the Dominican Republic.

However elongated the limits of Díaz's language might be, his scope is not limited to a superficial depiction of the Dominican experience—the reaches of his cultural and historical references are subtle yet telling. In the naming of Oscar's putative grandmother as La Inca, or in the adaptation of his name in a passage set in the Dominican Republic from Oscar to Huáscar (a ruler of the Inca empire directly before the Spanish invasion), Díaz recognises that South American history, so often dislocated from Caribbean history and thought, is part of his and the book's extended tradition. This could be construed to be another nod from Díaz to the all-encompassing history of colonial oppression in Latin America, as Glenda R. Carpio analysed in her essay 'Now Check It: Junot Díaz's Wondrous Spanglish': 'Díaz's formal experimentation allows him to highlight one of the most persistent means by which the oppressed have survived.' (2006: 284) The accrual of history in the novel is not merely found in the direct

references of the footnotes placed by Yunior, but also in Díaz's conscious references and allusions.

The historiographical approaches used by Díaz to deconstruct Dominican history have been discussed elsewhere in this dissertation,<sup>107</sup> and it is important to remember these are not merely restricted to be part of the plot composition; they also play a significant role in the formal experimentation of the novel. Yunior's use of footnotes<sup>108</sup> serve primarily as a method of further expanding upon concepts and facts which the reader is not necessarily aware of, but they also act, in parallel to Oscar's family history, as a brief and scattered autobiography.<sup>109</sup> Explaining the exploitative Latin American practice of child servants, Footnote 31 reads:

31. I lived in Santo Domingo only until I was nine, and even I knew criadas. Two of them lived in the callejón behind our house, and these girls were the most demolished, overworked human beings I'd known at that time. One girl, Sobeida, did all the cooking, all the cleaning, fetched all the water, and took care of two infants for a family of *eight*—and chickie was only seven years old! (253)

The hypertextuality of Yunior's descriptions of injustice in the Dominican Republic are further expanded should the reader decide to delve beyond *Oscar Wao*—Díaz's other two books are short story collections in which Yunior's backstory is significantly extended. But as a self-contained tool, his footnotes could indeed be read as an analogous novel; one which reflects the issues dealt with in the main text from an

---

<sup>107</sup> See: Chapter I, p. 62.

<sup>108</sup> As has been stated in Chapter I, p. 62, this is a technique influenced by Patrick Chamoiseau's 1992 novel *Texaco*.

<sup>109</sup> In her essay 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Cannibalist: Reading Yunior (Writing) in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*', Monica Hanna uses the term *Künstlerroman* to refer to Yunior's character progression and growing awareness throughout the novel's narration, arguing that 'what emerges in his narrative is an aesthetics of artistic consumption, which reflects Díaz's vision of the development of the model writer-activist.' (Hanna et al, 2016: 14).

almost analytical standpoint, interspersing his conversational register with several inclusions of academic language. The character of Yunior, therefore, often becomes the author of a book under the supervision of Junot Díaz, creating a sense of vague academic rigour in line with extra-literary approaches, mixing the registers of oral history with those of formal historiography.<sup>110</sup>

The liminal space between autobiography and diegesis is exploited on two levels: *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* is the title of the book, though not necessarily what the book is about. Indeed, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* is a book about a book that could be called *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (an annotated narrative with added footnotes). The only clues as to what the actual structure of the novel looks like are found in the headings and sub-headings of the three chapters divided into eight sections.<sup>111</sup> The self-insertion of Yunior into the core story is made explicitly evident in the final chapter (The End of the Story), in which he recounts the years that followed Oscar's death and the De León family's ultimate fate. The chapter's sub-headings bear titles such as 'As for us', 'As for me', and 'On a super final note' to resolve the narrative with unambiguous demarcations which render the

---

<sup>110</sup> Histogriography that is never quite fully academised, as evidenced by the lack of real or, indeed, invented references to books from which Yunior might have collected his information.

<sup>111</sup> Though not necessarily reminiscent of a choose-your-own-adventure book (in the manner of Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela*, for example)—these chapters could indeed be read in a different order, jumping between dates. Chronologically speaking part one deals with events from 1974 to 1987; part two 1982-1985; part three 1955-1962; part four 1988-1992; part five 1944-1946; part six 1992-1995; part seven with the recent past; part eight with the present. So a different way of reading the book could be to go from part five to part three, followed by parts one/two, four, six and the final two. One assumes Yunior's narrative occurs several years after 1995, but the exact date is never revealed.

structure of the book all the more settled and confirm Yunior as not merely a narrator but also an author.

The immediacy of Yunior's language, therefore, belies his authorial position. Díaz's style has often been construed as engaging and thoroughly contemporary, and the voice of Yunior in *Oscar Wao* is an excellent illustration of both qualities, yet it should be noted that the book's aesthetic qualities go beyond a rudimentary street corner conversation and represent a finely crafted, multi-layered narrative in which direct language often serves as a mirage of simplicity. The full virtuosity of *Oscar Wao* depends on the level of acquaintance of the reader with the text, not from a purely analytical standpoint, but also from recognising the fundamental role of language and the deep threads of intralingual translation found within. The final result represents a subversion of English not with a single type of Spanish, but with a consciously chosen plethora of registers.

Outside of *Oscar Wao* and beyond Yunior's narrative voice, Díaz's language becomes even more multi-layered when one considers that the Spanish he engages with is not derived from a singular tradition. It is a direct, rich representation of his upbringing, and the prime example of a language that has kept evolving through conquest, colonial and migratory processes. In many of Díaz's short stories, the words and slang he perceptively employs are not exclusively Dominican; there are multiple tinges of Mexican ('chamaco' in 'Otravida, Otravez'), Puerto Rican, Cuban, Peruvian ('guachimán' in 'The Sun, the Moon, the Stars') registers and even a knowingly ambitious use of the Argentinean argot 'mina' (girl, chick) when referring to a



Dominican girl, found in his last published short story ‘Monstro’, a taster of his seemingly abandoned second novel:

Because of the weak light I didn’t get a good look at first. Just the hair, and the vampire-stake heels. Then she finally made it over and I saw the cut on her and the immensity of those eyes and I was, like, fuck me. [...] A ridiculously beautiful mina wafting up a metal corkscrew staircase in high heels and offering up her perfect cheek as the light from the Dome was dying out across the city—that I could have withstood. But then she spent the rest of the night ribbing me because I was so Americanized, because my Spanish sucked, because I didn’t know any of the Island things they were talking about—and that was it for me. I was lost. (2012)

The so-called “melting pot” properties of the United States, perpetuated by the negotiations amongst the immigrants themselves more than by the system, are already producing felicitous consequences in terms of linguistic experimentation. A 2014 study by the Instituto Cervantes<sup>112</sup> prognosticated that, should current trends continue, the United States will become the largest Spanish-speaking country in the world by 2050 (the official number currently stands at just above forty-one million speakers). Not only will this mean that Díaz’s output will become more widely analysed, it also points towards a time when literature written in Spanish will no longer have to be divided into the two currently well-defined canons of Latin American and Spanish literature—there is space, too, for a third, all-encompassing variant that retains all the characteristics created over the years by geopolitical divisions, peculiarities that often take concepts from native languages and even other European languages. Unlike Danticat, whose careful editing and translation of Kreyòl phrases makes her books more accessible in order to expand her audience, Díaz has seemingly found widespread acclaim without smoothing the edges of his fiction. A 2015 BBC Culture poll asked a group of prominent

---

<sup>112</sup> Instituto Cervantes (2014). ‘Español: Una Lengua Viva’. [report] Available at: <http://eldiae.es/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/El-espa%C3%B1ol-lengua-viva-2014.pdf> [Last accessed 10/1/2015].

literary critics to name the top twenty novels of the twenty-first century so far; *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* came out on top.<sup>113</sup> Obliquely or directly, it is safe to say the intended message is coming across and the book has not remained a cult novel with a niche audience.

There is another particularity to Díaz's language that, quite literally, cannot be put into words. When former president of the Dominican Republic Joaquín Balaguer (a *Trujillista* politician through and through) wrote his memoirs, he intentionally left a blank page where details of the murder of journalist Orlando Martínez Howley should have been—a sketch that Díaz develops into another concept: *La página en blanco* or The Blank Page. Díaz employs this notion to exemplify not only how repressive governments tend to hide and erase history, but also to portray the difficulties in elocution of those who wish to join the dots afterwards. *La página en blanco* does not merely carry the untranslatability of words on paper, but also an untranslatability of more elusive concepts such as pain, trauma and silence. 'The countries where we come from have enormous amounts of silence and absences and horrors,' Díaz admitted in a roundtable with fellow authors of Latin American origin Daniel Alarcón and Francisco Goldman, 'I exhaust language very quickly' (in Alarcón, 2013).

Growing up the son of a policeman during the Trujillo years, Díaz is enthralled not only by the stories of the past, a past, in Edouard Glissant's words 'which has not yet emerged as history for us (but that) is however, obsessively present,' (1992: 23) but

---

<sup>113</sup> Ciabattari, J. (2015) *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century's 12 Greatest Novels*. BBC Culture [Online] . Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20150119-the-21st-century-12-best-novels> [Last accessed 1/1/2018].

also by the information that was withheld from him. Díaz's demarcation of the past finds its own logic not only in language but also in the atrocities left unmentioned. For Díaz, this silence constitutes a suppression that must not be avoided in discussions of cultural hegemony:

So much of our experience as Caribbean Diasporic peoples exists in silence. How can we talk about our experiences in any way if both our own local cultural and the larger global culture doesn't want to talk about them and actively resists our attempt to create language around them? (in Alarcón, 2013)

Starting from this position of resistance, Díaz seems to find a temporary solution to the politics of silence through his own work. The aforementioned exhaustion of language faced by him (which mirrors the exasperation felt by George Steiner after the Holocaust) is not only the consequence of his driving force, which aims primarily to depict the lives of people not often represented in the mainstream culture of the United States, but also brings about the construction of a third language designed to both portray and critique the life of the contemporary immigrant and his or her environment. Díaz and Danticat's quest to find new methods of expression between and within silence is ultimately an attempt to regain power through language, rather than give in to the limitations of it, but these elocutions, although performed in flux, could be said to find temporary lodging in a 'third space'.

Homi Bhabha originally proposed the third space theory in his 1994 book *The Location of Culture*, a text full of his distinctive opacity that needs to be decoded before being applied to extraterritoriality. It borrows from W.E.B. Du Bois' concept of double consciousness, a theory that Bhabha frequently refers to and translates into what he calls 'ambivalence'—that state of conflicting reactions which in this case refers to the

reconciliation of an African heritage with a European upbringing. This ambivalence, according to Bhabha, gives birth to hybrid beings who are a product of the mix between their various cultural identities, including, in postcolonial cases, the coloniser's own cultural identity. Note that he would rather use 'hybrid' than 'multicultural', something to which Latin Americans, with the varied history of *mestizaje* in each country of the continent, can relate to quite easily.

According to Bhabha, this third space is born out of the uniqueness of an agent as a hybrid—that is to say, every person is an accumulation of his or her identity factors, the context and role of social and cultural capital. The third space is any zone where this hybridity can be enunciated, giving place to the emergence of new cultural forms. To put theory directly into practice: Díaz has been known for depicting stereotypes: the narrator of his three books, Yunior, could superficially be read as the common image of the Dominican male, subservient to sexual impulses and pandering to the stereotype. But upon further examination and without the need for scrupulous analyses, the reader finds these stereotypes challenged and often destroyed by Díaz himself through the construction and development of his characters: Oscar happens to be the polar opposite of Yunior, yet they both find a voice in the narrative. But I would argue this technique of narrative construction is not where the third space lies. Díaz finds his third space in language itself, in the distrust of both Spanish and English<sup>114</sup> which, in turn, creates a platform for enunciation that is neither here nor there, a

---

<sup>114</sup> A skepticism towards Core languages which, when viewed through the lens of Steiner's modes of translation departing from trust, further proves that this new extraterritorial approach challenges every stage of the process of translation—starting from the challenge of the (often historical) colonial sources that construct modern languages.

wholly extraterritorial method of constructing discourse through literature that, in his status as a bilingual speaker, could be referred to as a 'third language'.

In the introduction to the new edition of *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha writes: 'Learning to work with the contradictory strains of languages *lived*, and languages *learned*, has the potential for a remarkable critical and creative impulse' (1994: 10) It is important to note that both Díaz and Danticat learned English in their childhood, and their relationship to the adoptive language they use in their writing is subject to and shaped by their unfamiliarity with it. However, the incongruity of language and setting also plays a vital role in their fiction. Once English becomes the primary method of communication for a second-generation immigrant growing up in the United States, Spanish, too, represented in the distant yet familiar culture of the homeland, becomes a *learned*, rather than *lived*, language. Chapter six of *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* depicts the final trip of Oscar to the Dominican Republic, and his adaptation to a new life, which, seen through the prism of his (or rather, Yunior's) Northern upbringing, is staunchly critical of societal structures:

...he'd gotten somewhat used to the surreal whirligig that was life in La Capital—the guaguas, the cops, the mind-boggling poverty, the Dunkin' Donuts, the beggars, the Haitians selling roasted peanuts at the intersections, the mind-boggling poverty, the asshole tourists hogging up all the beaches, the Xica da Silva novelas where homegirl got naked every five seconds... (1997: 276-7)

Bhabha's theory of ambivalence, thus, becomes quite literal in helping place the narrator's position in the Dominican context.<sup>115</sup> Oscar (through Yunior) is neither part of the 'asshole tourist' nor the Haitian peanut salesmen groups, his stance is *doubly* aware of its misery-laden surroundings, yet it serves as a bridge between these

---

<sup>115</sup> Using the etymological root of the word ambi-, 'on both sides' plus -valence, 'strength'.

surroundings and the elsewhere—the elsewhere here being the (mutable) position where the reader of this particular book is reading from. Referring to Walter Benjamin's theories of translation, Bhabha wrote: 'In the act of translation the 'given' content becomes alien and estranged; and that, in its turn, leaves the language of translation, *Aufgabe*, always confronted by its double, the untranslatable—alien and foreign.' (2013: 12) This dialectical exercise between creation and silence, between the foreignness of translation and personal experience is at the heart of Danticat's and Díaz's work.

We are then confronted with another barrier of untranslatability: that of the recipient. When making sense of Hispaniola through Edwidge Danticat and Junot Díaz's work, readers in the United States (and beyond) of varied levels of acquaintance with the history of Haiti and the Dominican Republic would have different interpretations of the fiction within— outside of those with personal knowledge of both countries, the majority of readers would perhaps only be familiar with cultural stereotypes or images of the island promulgated by the international media. The act of translation is not merely one of transferring codes; it too represents the reassembling of a shattered history in which language acts as an adhesive that brings the shards back together. However, as with all transactions, particularly cross-cultural ones, and even more urgently those conducted between the United States and Latin America, there is a significant influence of power structures that should not go unnoticed.

## Decolonising Lenguaje

Although the term extraterritorial, in its most accessible sense, denotes a lack of rootedness, the vessels floated by fiction created in flux seek, from time to time, a temporary mooring. As has been pointed out, the specific situation of Díaz and Danticat living and producing their work in the United States, as citizens of that country, plays a central role for the dissemination of their work, but also in their use and distrust of language. This represents a lack of affiliation that could be, as Steiner would argue, the result of a loss of centre, but which could also represent the vision of a future, de-centered America—a continent in which fiction and stories trespass core languages and geographic boundaries by virtue of their extraterritorial genesis. However, far from being a utopian extension of Simón Bolívar's dream, any eventual erasure of thresholds on both sides of the Rio Grande would inevitably imply a substantial amount of forgiveness and forgetfulness.<sup>116</sup> As scholar Walter D. Mignolo, who has written several pieces on decolonial aesthetics, has said: 'To embrace Americanness is to dwell in the erasures of coloniality' (2012: 45). Mignolo argues that the defence of purity in discussions of a linguistic vein is a defence of the hegemony of a colonial epistemology—noting that 'language is the companion of the empire and a unifying factor of the nation' (2012: 46). To counter this linguistic colonisation, Mignolo has attempted to develop a theory of 'border thinking', which is itself correlated to theories of the subaltern and exemplified in works of literature born from the fringes of society. Contrasting it with mainstream epistemology derived from years of imperialism, Mignolo argues that border thinking:

---

<sup>116</sup> A task which, given the current political climate of the year 2017, is as complicated and turgid as it has ever been.

[...] allows you to imagine possible futures in which the richness of thought and creativity in language comes from the borders. More specifically, from the subaltern side of the border, from Black-English into English; from Latino-Spanish into Spanish (e.g., infecting hegemonic epistemology from Black-English or Spanish, as Toni Morrison and Gloria Anzaldúa do). From this kind of epistemology you can then derive political strategies and ethical imperatives. Otherwise, you will depend on the political frame and ethical imperatives imposed by the 'good side' of existing hegemonic narratives, operating on the concept of 'territory' rather than of 'borderland' or 'double consciousness' or '*une pensée-autre*,' or operating on the conceptualization embedded in colonial languages, of which English is the last and more powerful version, nationally and internationally. (2012: 12-13)

The deconstruction of interlingual and intralingual translation that can be exemplified in the work of Díaz could make his work seamlessly fit into the framework of border thinking (itself closely related to the extraterritorial), yet this relationship could not be established without first analysing the historical roots of the languages he uses as tools. The colonial properties of the Spanish language are widely recognisable in the plethora of accents and uses given to it in Latin America; however, for Díaz living in New Jersey, Spanish, although commonly heard in his habitus, still held the position of a secondary language in the larger scope of the nation and its educational system. On the other hand, English, or the United States version of English, has a clear influence of economic and cultural expansion in Latin America, and as such, actively promotes the hegemony of the nation's rhetoric and external policy. This reconfiguration of preponderance belies the fact that, in their purest forms, both languages have historically played the role of being tools of colonial expansion, and as such, should always be approached with the required suspicion of frameworks postulated by years of colonial thought.

Díaz consciously questions the hegemony of Core languages and views the relationship of both languages from a historiographical point of view, recognising that



there is an ‘ancient somatic tension between English and Spanish’ (Díaz in Cresci, 2013) that stretches from before the arrival of both languages to the New World. However, instead of seeing himself as a recipient of either tradition, Díaz’s fabrication and utilisation of a third language denotes a complete linguistic disaffiliation from preconceived notions of what these languages can or cannot do, using his extraterritorial position as a foil. Díaz has stated: ‘My immigrant position, both in Spanish and in English—I’m as much an immigrant to Spanish as I am to English—means that I have no confidence of either language or in either language’ (Díaz in Cresci, 2013). The lack of linguistic ownership exercised by Díaz is part of what makes his fiction so engaging; it is a hidden dance with no leading partner. The addition of colloquial Spanish to his work, in which many turns of phrase could change meaning depending on the geographical context or indeed not be fully understood by, say, a reader from Uruguay or Spain, is the crucial symptom of this disassociation from the more formal elocution of a canonical language.

Defining the identity of a continent through a new language would be an impossible task for a single writer; however, Díaz’s work opens new possibilities to what a de-centered, decolonised language could look like in his conscious decision to commit a linear, un-italicised amalgamation to paper. If we construed this as Díaz’s method to recreate the everyday registers of the Dominican diaspora, and if we assumed his work to be a faithful translation of said registers, then the credit for subverting language should not only be attributed to the author, but part of it also belongs to the larger community that he attempts to represent in his work. Indeed, outside of literature, the dissemination of what has often been termed ‘Spanglish’ constitutes a perpetual change of norms and disclosures—words are not interchanged

on a normative basis and there is no singular totemic version of Spanglish, as it resists classification on an everyday basis. This is how border thinking becomes embedded in creativity to find new outlets of expression, operating beyond the limitations of a single hegemonic language, and as such, possessing many of the properties attributed to decolonisation. The use of these new forms, in turn, represents an act of linguistic transgression that has very little to do with Steiner's concept of translation departing from trust. On the contrary, the principles of decolonial translation, and indeed those of extraterritorial literature, are always based in a lack of trust towards the root language. A fact echoed by the epigraph of Díaz's debut collection *Drown*, a quote from Gustavo Pérez Firmat's poem 'Bilingual Blues': 'The fact that I / am writing to you in English / already falsifies what I / wanted to tell you. / My subject: / how to explain to you that I / don't belong to English / though I belong nowhere else' (Perez Firmat in Díaz, 1997).

Echoing Derrida's questioning of what it means to own a language, it is important to note that this lack of trust towards both English and Spanish still operates within the limitations of the author's scope. It recognises the impossibility of conveying information at its fullest, but nonetheless strives towards decolonisation, however incomplete the final result might be. This approach is quite different from the active choice of language desertion in the name of decolonisation exercised, for example, by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, the Kenyan author and playwright who famously renounced English and turned to Gikuyu as his preferred method of expression. His main arguments for doing so are found in *Decolonising the Mind*, a collection of essays that, rather than presenting an argument for and against the use of English in African literature, actively encourages 'linguistic decolonisation' from a radically partisan standpoint. The African experience, he argues, cannot possibly be expressed in the

language of the coloniser, a language based on oppression and strict regulation, and must turn its back on Eurocentric norms to bring about 'national, democratic and human liberation' (1986: 108).

This recalls not only the arguments but also the language (often times the exact terminology) of Frantz Fanon, who began his seminal collection of essays *Black Skin, White Masks* with a denunciation of linguistic imperialism, contending that 'a man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language.' (2008: 5) The opening essay of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, titled 'The Negro and Language', is essentially a reinterpretation of W.E.B. Du Bois' theory of double consciousness, in which the colonised subject is forced to divide herself or himself into different dimensions depending on the context, thus creating more than one claim to cultural identity or even a lack of firm affiliation to *any* cultural identity—a notion echoed by Díaz in the embodiment of Oscar Wao's estrangement in the United States and his unrequited sense of belonging in the Dominican Republic. It is imperative to remark that these identities are never stable: at the time of Fanon's writing (and arguably even now, though perhaps not as cynically evident) a black man in Europe was constantly condescended to primarily by the way he was spoken to; should this same man return to his homeland, he would be seen as having become Europeanised. The alienation caused by racism was not simply erased by returning home, where being wholly accepted into one's old community was never a tangible possibility.<sup>117</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> This Caribbean preoccupation with the impossibility of return is exemplified in Oscar Wao's return to the Dominican Republic—where he is seen as an outsider, much like in the United States—but his own anxiety to fit in eventually results in his dramatic end. This has been a constant theme in literature created by authors born in the Caribbean, antagonistically summarised by Dany Laferrière in his book *The Enigma of Return*: 'In fact, the real opposition is not between countries, no matter

In *The Wretched of The Earth*, Fanon goes one step further, arguing that the formation of culture and a new identity implies the renunciation of the old colonial codes; it's a matter of either/or, and it inevitably involves the reaffirmation of national culture (which according to Fanon does not equate to nationalism, 2008: 19) as a method of liberation and an antidote to colonised thinking. By radically changing the language of his artistic output, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o effectively set that theory into practice in his radical decision to stop writing in English altogether. The possibility of decolonising language, judging by the example set by wa Thiong'o becomes thus thoroughly dependent on bilingualism—one must have a starting and a replacement language. This approach, effectively, eludes transactions or discussions about translation by rescinding one code for another—the final outcome is not actively decolonising the text, but presenting an already decolonised text.

The argument of linguistic hegemony has been widely covered in postcolonial theory with varying degrees of density.<sup>118</sup> But rather than focusing on issues of repossession, the extraterritorial approach subverts the language of the coloniser to re-write and reassess the history of the colonised, as I have attempted to demonstrate by exemplifying how Díaz strives to create new linguistic pathways. It acknowledges the colonial properties of English and Spanish and attempts, by identifying its nexuses with

---

how different they are, but between those who have had to learn to live at other latitudes (even in inferior conditions) and those who have never had to face a culture other than their own [...] For three-quarters of the people on this planet only one type of travel is possible and that's to find themselves without papers in a country whose language and customs they know nothing of.' (2013: 27).

<sup>118</sup> See, for example: Bhabha's introduction to *Nation and Narration* and Spivak's essay 'The Politics of Interpretation' found in her compilation *In Other Worlds: Essays In Cultural Politics* (pp. 161-183).

the status quo of both countries,<sup>119</sup> to redress the balance by inserting hypertextuality in the shape of colloquialisms and cultural references.

Danticat, in turn, is faced with the choice between writing in the language of the country she lives in, or choosing one of the two languages spoken in the land where she was born. In a hypothetical case, she could one day decide to start writing in Kreyòl, an impossibility for the bilingual Díaz. The effects and difficulties of such a choice will be discussed later in this chapter, but her decision, like Díaz's, does not completely fall in line with wa Thiong'o's radical detachment, yet it still coincides with similar philosophies of decolonial thought.

Responding to wa Thiong'o's assertion that African writers should write in African languages, Chinua Achebe argued that English could, too, serve as a tool, 'infiltrating the ranks of the enemy and destroying him from within. [...] Language is a weapon, and we use it' (in Gallagher, 1997: 260). As we shall see shortly, for Danticat, this strategy is found in her construction of English over Kreyòl over French; in Díaz's case, in his knowing concoction of Spanish and English through the usage of slang and post-modern pop culture references—both approaches are, by definition, decolonial, yet they still engage with Core languages. The refusal to articulate their ideas through a single dialect and sporadically revert to their native countries' preponderant languages would place them closer to Achebe than Thiong'o, yet it is important to acknowledge that Díaz and Danticat belong to a generation already well aware of the issues raised by

---

<sup>119</sup> Though more explicitly focused on the Dominican regime of Rafael Trujillo. The influence of United States foreign policy is referred to on several occasions; however, this is more tacit than explicit in that there are no characters in *Oscar Wao* who could represent US imperialism—this influence never seems to come into direct contact with the protagonists, yet it is there.

postcolonialism, a generation that recognises Fanon as a vital influence, but not necessarily as the commander-in-chief of a specific battle against the oppression of colonial language. A truly radical approach would imply that, in the very specific case of the Dominican Republic, renouncing Spanish would mean having to resurrect the Arawak/Taíno language, extinct for centuries<sup>120</sup> while authors born in Haiti are always faced with the disjunctive of whether Kreyòl is a viable replacement to French in terms of the international dissemination of Haitian literature.<sup>121</sup> Díaz and Danticat elude these debates by writing in a third language and by doing so they subscribe to Edouard Glissant's views on the topic, who in his own work claimed that to 'relativise' the French Language, is to 'open up possibilities without imposing a tyrannical fixity' (Glissant in Munro, 2012: 210). This relativisation of language is precisely what Díaz and Danticat achieve with English in their fiction by means of linguistic subversion.

Questions of contemporary cultural imperialism naturally arise when moving towards a material discussion that takes into account the primary location of Díaz and Danticat's publishing: Are these new linguistic mixtures subverting the notion of language as an entity separate from politics, or are they subjected to their core component (the English language), and consequently, the overpowering cultural influence of the United States? 'To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization,' wrote Fanon (2008: 8). It is precisely in the field of language and translation where a critique of extraterritorial

---

<sup>120</sup> See: Chapter I, p. 49.

<sup>121</sup> This is a debate that stretches to other French speaking countries of the Antilles, and it constitutes a point of departure in Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant's essay 'Eloge de la créolité'.

writing can be better assembled, for otherwise it could become an overwhelming, almost inexhaustible source of discussion. A point of departure could be built from the impossibility for Danticat and Díaz to bear the entire cultural and historical weight of Haiti, the Dominican Republic and the United States at the same time. Yet, outside of geographical discussions, the matter of belonging, specifically linguistic belonging, should be put at the forefront of any analysis relating to Danticat and Díaz.

In *Monolingualism of the Other*, Derrida examines the role language plays in colonial processes, departing from a deconstruction of the notion of identity and further exploring the divisions between signifier and signified, between the invader and the colonised. At times mystical, Derrida's speech is as concise as it is intriguing, and it is probably no accident that several connections Derrida constructs remain unresolved. Yet some of these unanswered questions could be useful when establishing an extraterritorial critique. Evoking his other great essay on language (the more translation-focused *Des tours de Babel*),<sup>122</sup> Derrida uses the term 'homo-hegemony' to contend that *all* language is fundamentally a colonial practice used by humans to reduce the heterogeneous nature of reality, even though ultimately all attempts to translate the world are bound to be futile.

The problematic of being able to assume that one can have a native language is especially resonant in the case of Hispaniola, given how both sides of the island have historically traded, clashed with, and created linguistic forms of various registers. The ownership of Spanish by the Dominican Republic is as tenuous as the contention that

---

<sup>122</sup> Translated by Joseph F. Graham in the 1980s and found under its original French title in *Difference in Translation* (also edited by Graham, 1985).

this is, somehow, a more 'civilised' language than Kreyòl, whose syntactic and metaphoric complexity arguably matches or even exceeds that of any Core language. Derrida not only questions preconceived notions of possession but also the idea that belonging to a group of people who speak the same language grants every member of the group access to an equal cultural identity—in Latin America, the colonial divisions of race and class are living testimony to this impossibility.<sup>123</sup> Even if this homogenous use of language existed, social inequality would always be present depending on who has more control over it.<sup>124</sup>

Furthermore, Derrida asks if the construction of identity can be simplified to the point where a shared language is sufficient to create a collective. In Latin American history, the contradictions of *mestizaje* and *criollismo*<sup>125</sup> show that language also acts as a method of segregation. Even in contemporary Europe, national government policy often strives to teach the official language of each country to immigrants, and although this is done in the name of social cohesion and integration, it too creates a separation and a constant (subconsciously racist) inquiry of 'how well' the language is spoken. Learning a language, we should note, is only one stage of communication—there are several levels and trials involved in the process. Díaz and Danticat, as immigrants but also authors of published literature, show that their command of a language alien to

---

<sup>123</sup> See: Chapter I, page 49.

<sup>124</sup> Notwithstanding the extermination of the Taíno language, we can still see the colonial power of language today when analysing the specific example of Andean South America, where clear social and economic divisions are deeply linked in the use of language: people who have Spanish as a second language, who grew up speaking indigenous languages such as Quechua or Aymara at home and for whom Spanish is the language they learned at school (a stern, bureaucratic Spanish, it has to be added) have long been segregated and derided by those who have it as a first language.

<sup>125</sup> See: Chapter I, page 49.



their place of birth is not only possible; it can, too, be transcended. However, we should go back to Bhabha's differentiation between languages *lived* and languages *learned* to become aware of this differentiation. This process of adaptation is constantly present in veiled manners throughout the fictional work of both Díaz and Danticat, but more explicitly undertaken in Danticat's non-fiction recollection of her upbringing, the 2007 book *Brother, I'm Dying*.

### ***Lòt bò dlo:***

#### **The Other Side of Language in the work of Edwidge Danticat**

*Brother, I'm Dying* is an intimate work. Through the first-hand account of Danticat's personal story, the experience of forced migration, an experience full of uncertainties and anxieties, is represented in three different waves: The relatively smooth departure of her parents; her own delayed trip to join them in New York; and the tragic exilic death of her uncle Joseph. Danticat's narrative freely criss-crosses boundaries and jumps in time in a way that enacts a constant dialogue between the island and its northern neighbour, yet there are always filters of interaction that outline a clear-cut distance between Haiti and the elsewhere: Muddled telephone conversations, edited letters, messages which are given and those which are withheld. To quote Edward Said: 'we are, so to speak, of the connections, not outside and beyond them.' (1984: 34). It is through these connections and, crucially, through the *limits of communication*, that the relationship between the immigrant and his or her sense of belonging is better understood. These dichotomies of silence and articulation are found throughout Danticat's fictional output, and incarnated in *Brother I'm Dying* by the figure of her uncle, a former Baptist pastor who loses his speech after a tracheotomy and is forced to

travel from Haiti to New York in order to receive an operation that eventually allows him to communicate through a voice machine.

While the fixation of Danticat with stilted international and intergenerational dialogues could be directly linked to her personal history, we should note that these are not ubiquitous traits in every immigrant experience. There are, too, authors who wish to go beyond long distance calls and focus mainly on their present condition. Such is the case of Dany Laferrière, a Haitian-born author living in Quebec and an acquaintance of Danticat's, whose work and rhetoric shows less of an exilic longing and more of a preoccupation with the cosmopolitan lifestyle. His theory of writers not being tied to a particular nationality, but rather adopting the nationality of their readers<sup>126</sup> transcends exile and even goes beyond post-exile, pointing towards an extraterritoriality dispossessed of all national ties that has much more in common with the work of certain writers of the generation that immediately succeeds Danticat's.<sup>127</sup> However, developing or relinquishing immediate links to the country of one's birth is never a straightforward matter. Laferrière evidences this in the introduction he wrote for *The Edwidge Danticat Reader*, positing the concept of a plurality of nations contained within

---

<sup>126</sup> A question referenced by Danticat in her book of essays *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work*, specifically in Chapter One, of the same name: 'I too sometimes wonder if in the intimate, both solitary and solidary, union between writers and readers a border can really exist. Is there a border between Antigone's desire to bury her brother and the Haitian mother of 1964 who desperately wants to take her dead son's body out of the street to give him a proper burial, knowing that if she does this she too may die? So perhaps after those executions when those young men and women were reading *Caligula*, Albert Camus became a Haitian writer. When they were reading *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*, Sophocles too became a Haitian writer.' (2010; 16).

<sup>127</sup> As is the case of works by contemporary authors, such as Teju Cole's *Open City*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* or NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, who devote more pages to the construction of identities in the present, rather than spending too much time analysing the past.

the memory of an author's mind. Speaking about his personal conversations with Danticat, he writes:

I remember those times when she felt herself somewhat torn between this almost magic world that lived within her and that seemed to her at the point of plunging into nostalgia, and that New York modernity that was sending her signals ever more rapidly. How to reconcile these two worlds? The question was all the more complex in that there are two, maybe three Haitis: the Haiti that she keeps fresh in her memory, the Haiti of her parents who lived with her in Brooklyn, and the country itself that she continued to see on television and in the newspapers, always in difficulty. (Lafèrrière in Munro, 2010: 2)

Unlike that of Laferrière's, Danticat's work is fundamentally tangled up with and defined by Haiti.<sup>128</sup> Her stories either deal with characters living in Haiti or characters who are part of the Haitian diaspora with strong links to the island. But rather than positing a single definition of what Haiti is, and establishing a binomial relationship between those who stay and those who leave, Laferrière too acknowledges the existence of a variety of Haitis, and thus, a plethora of cognitive experiences of what the country symbolises. Haiti is a unique example in which the aspirations of what the country could be are always tied to the omnipresence of the past and the frustrating anxieties of the present. The main difficulty arises when an author attempts to portray an evolving notion of a nation without his or her physical presence in it. Characterising the contemporary state of Haiti would indeed require a notion of what's happening on the ground right now, something which Danticat and writers living abroad can only see glimpses of—although, unlike Díaz, Danticat reports with far more frequency about the

---

<sup>128</sup> This lack of urgency to establish (or to remark on the lack of) a bond with their native land probably stems from the belonging to a very different generation of diaspora, one for which returning is not an emotionally laborious voyage. If one were to draw a Dominican parallel to the relationship between Danticat and Lafèrrière, it would perhaps be that of Junot Díaz and Julia Alvarez.

news and tribulations of the island across publications based in the United States.<sup>129</sup> But even setting the mutable manifestation of present-day Haiti aside, there are still at least two notions of Haiti aching to be spoken about and reassessed: the inherited, often historiographical vision of Haiti through Danticat's parents and the first-hand memory of the country she lived in during part of her early upbringing.

We know the impossibility of a return to the homeland has been an obsession of literature from Ancient Greek poetry and *The Odyssey* to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's 2013 novel *Americanah*, but an extraterritorial approach should perhaps pay less attention to the terminus and focus on the connections between these versions of Haiti and how they interact with each other in Danticat's work. This case of overlapping territories and distance is acutely articulated by the Kreyòl expression *lòt bò dlo*, literally translated as 'the other side of the water' but also used to denote an émigré's eventual destination and the ultimate trip towards the afterlife, an appropriate subtitle for Danticat's œuvre, itself often a matter of life and death.

*Brother, I'm Dying* begins by drawing an evident parallel between life and death when Danticat is informed of her pregnancy on the same day her father is diagnosed with end-stage pulmonary fibrosis (without his initially learning about it). The reader is then taken back and forth between 2004, when most of Danticat's immediate family is already settled in the United States, and 1977, when, as an eight year old, she lived in Haiti under the care of her uncle, hoping to join her parents in New York but not knowing when exactly this would be possible. The conversations between herself and

---

<sup>129</sup> Since the earthquake of 2010, her articles about Haiti and Haitian life have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Miami Herald* and *The Atlantic* to name but a few.

her father were merely limited to monthly letters, sent through her uncle and read aloud by Danticat, a practice that, according to her, played a crucial role in her subsequently becoming a writer. Standard greetings and administrative chores aside, Danticat remarks that these letters contained 'the words that both my father and I wanted to exchange but we never did [...] No matter what the reason, we have always been equally paralyzed by the fear of breaking each other's heart' (2007: 24). This, she argues, is the main motive why she was hesitant to inform her father about his terminal illness years later. For Danticat, language seems to be not only a matter of active interaction, but also encompasses those gaps that arise from a lack of articulation, the anxiety of stillness from which literature is born.

These lapses in communication, the assumed silences and withheld feelings are another characteristic of Danticat's work, but they are also constantly found in Díaz's fiction (sometimes explicitly, as in his use of *la página en blanco* as a narrative resource<sup>130</sup>). The politics of silence, as one could call them, are not only a clear convergence point between Danticat and Díaz, they seem to be practices inherited from several of their shared influences, too. An example can be found in the work of Toni Morrison—perhaps their biggest aesthetic inspiration—who, much like Frantz Fanon, saw language as the start of any debate about the roots of inequality. She famously said: 'Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge' (1993: 8). In *Playing In The Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, Morrison draws significant parallels between silence and action, implying that authors 'who live with and within policing strategies' (1993: 19) help to maintain the status quo by refusing to find schemes for

---

<sup>130</sup> See: Chapter II, p. 122.

breaking those silences.<sup>131</sup> Her 1993 Nobel lecture, which places language at its core, is a key text that acts as a touchstone from which Díaz and Danticat seem to draw vigour for their own work.

Morrison starts the lecture by summoning the myth of an old woman, a blind rural prophet who one day is visited by a group of youths determined to question her authority. They ask her to tell them whether the bird they are holding is alive or dead, and she answers that she cannot possibly reply, that the only thing she knows is that the bird is in their hands. From this image, Morrison creates a platform to question the uses of dialect and expound on the foundations of creativity itself. She interprets the bird as language and the old woman as a writer, who herself sees language ‘mostly as agency—as an act with consequences’ (1993). Amongst the plethora of quotes and analyses one could draw from this speech, one resonates strongly in the work of Danticat and Díaz:

[...] language can never live up to life once and for all. Nor should it. Language can never ‘pin down’ slavery, genocide, war. Nor should it yearn for the arrogance to be able to do so. Its force, its felicity is in its reach toward the ineffable. (1993)

After switching perspectives from the old woman to the youths and having carefully examined all the possible meanings and outcomes of this seemingly simple parable, Morrison comes to a conclusion: the act of questioning cannot be separated from creation, writing, and above all, language. The recognition of language as a perennially unfinished vessel that nonetheless strives towards indefinable shores is diametrically opposed to George Steiner’s resolute conception of language as a totem of

---

<sup>131</sup> Unwittingly echoing Saul Friedlander and Stuart Hall’s critiques of George Steiner, referenced above in p. 108.

morality, which either stands or crumbles. Although Steiner first articulated the term, extraterritorial literature, with its constantly fluctuating limits and its distrust of absolutes, has more elements in common with Morrison's definition.

The inquisitive spirit of language as means of survival is at the heart of *Brother, I'm Dying*, as the reader learns, through the story of Danticat's uncle Joseph, about the political history of twentieth-century Haiti. Joseph, who owned a house in the shantytown of Bel Air in Port-au-Prince, grew up with vivid memories of his childhood during the nineteen-year-long U.S. occupation of the country. As a young man, he became politically involved with the *Mouvement Ouvriers-Paysans* of Daniel Fignolé, who would eventually become provisional President of Haiti, a post he occupied for less than three weeks, before being deposed by the army and replaced months later by François 'Papa Doc' Duvalier. The ideological void Fignolé's fall left was soon filled by religion, as Joseph became a Baptist pastor and led his own church in Bel Air before being forced into an early retirement after undergoing a radical laryngectomy. Years later, after the death of his wife, having lived through the oppressive regimes of both Duvaliers and the frenzied years that followed, and having recovered part of his speech thanks to a voice box by travelling back and forth between Haiti and the United States for larynx operations, Joseph takes the drastic decision to leave his home for good.

The tragic end of *Brother, I'm Dying* could also be construed as a denial of the idea of total cosmopolitanism. Joseph, eighty-one years old at the time, flees Port-au-Prince in the middle of another wave of social upheaval. Seeking asylum in Miami, he experiences the harshness of U.S. Homeland Security first hand: he is detained, imprisoned, and ultimately killed by the negligence of a system that exposes the term

post-national for what it is: a flight of fancy allowed only to those with the right passport and the privilege of free movement. This liaison between the two physical territories, the island and its gargantuan neighbour, goes far beyond a checkpoint; it also constitutes, as Danticat notes, an abusive long-term relationship:

Did he think it ironic that he would soon be the dead prisoner of the same government that had been occupying his country when he was born? In essence he was entering and exiting the world under the same flag. Never really sovereign, as his father had dreamed, never really free. (2007: 210)

Ironic too, that Danticat is writing about this experience in the language of the oppressor while living in its belly, somehow exposing the drilled flaws of its structure and the systematic treatment of her compatriots as marginal individuals. Danticat's distresses are echoed by Jacques Derrida in *Monolingualism of the Other*: 'I wonder if one can love, enjoy oneself, pray, die from pain, or just die, plain and simple, in another language or without telling anyone about it, without even speaking at all.' (1998: 3) At times, *Brother I'm Dying* acts almost as a critique of imperial authority from within by using the codes and linguistic twists of a language in which the original story did not develop. The (undoubtedly laboured) process of learning English undertaken by Danticat herself is noticeably scattered in the book, yet the scene in which she is forced to undergo a physical exam prior to her first trip portrays this decision as a command rather than a choice:

The doctor was short and barrel-chested with skin the same color as his curly black hair, which he wore parted on one side. As he pushed my head back and pried open my mouth, he spoke to me in French, then repeated himself in English.

"*Parce qu'il faudra bientôt apprendre l'anglais,*" he said. Because you'll soon have to learn English. (2007: 98)

A clearer explanation of Danticat's choice to write in English and her condition as a trilingual speaker, though not necessarily a trilingual writer, is found in her



interviews. In 2012, she confessed to Haris Durani that her first writings were committed to paper parallel to her English language education, when she was already living in the United States. Her Haitian educational experience consisted of learning French in school and speaking Kreyòl at home, yet the neutrality offered to her by English seemed more suitable to her needs as an author: 'After all, she added, if she wrote in Creole her family might frequently grumble, point to a page, and say, "Ah, that's not the right word." At least, she joked, they trusted her English.' (Durrani, 2012) Indeed, many of the Kreyòl phrases she employs in her work might have certain inaccuracies, but rather than being embroiled in an interlingual or intralingual dichotomy, Danticat's language overlooks technicalities by being closer to the aims of intersemiotic translation—that is to say, a translation which generally bypasses verbal signs and places the emphasis on the general message. In the specific case of *Brother I'm Dying*, style is subservient to substance, as the emphasis is placed on contextualising history to shed light on the unjust politics of migration.

This is another characteristic of Danticat's writing: it seeks to right wrongs with the aid of an external scope—a scope which is transgressive in its content, rather than in its form. However, as seen in her interviews, she is acutely aware of discussions regarding self-translation and language amalgamation, and unlike Díaz, she is still able to communicate in three different languages to varying degrees of written eloquence. Elsewhere, in her book of essays *Create Dangerously*, Danticat explicitly refers to the contradictions in the life and language of the immigrant author by observing:

One of the advantages of being an immigrant is that two very different countries are forced to merge within you. The language you were born speaking and the one you will probably die speaking have no choice but to find a common place in your brain and regularly merge there. (2010: 98)

This problematic goes beyond simple issues of citizenship, affiliation, and linguistic adherence. The decision (and ability) to write not in Kreyòl or French, but in a third language, unfamiliar yet not entirely alien to the place of one's birth, has differing results, not least of all upon publication. The literary establishment in the United States recognised *Brother I'm Dying* with the National Book Critics Circle Award and later editions included a sticker with the recommendation of *O*, the magazine of Oprah Winfrey, perhaps the definitive sign of mainstream acceptance. These two accolades are seldom given to books in translation, which suggests that the commercial impact would have been different, perhaps more muted, had these books been written in a different language.<sup>132</sup>

Elocution and reception, however, are two autonomous processes. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues: 'When they want to hear an Indian speaking as an Indian, a Third World woman speaking as a Third World woman, they cover over the fact of the ignorance that they are allowed to possess, into a kind of homogenization.' (2006: 60). As far as Danticat and her editors are concerned, there seems to be a conscious effort to make her language as accessible as possible to casual readers in the United States. Most uses of Kreyòl are followed by a textual translation or a lengthy clarification. French, as in most of Danticat's work, is found only in proper names and the odd standalone word.

---

<sup>132</sup> Her own adherence to the United States is dramatically recreated in *Brother I'm Dying*, when, as a child, she attends a visa interview at the US embassy in Haiti with her brother: 'Hanging on the wall behind him was a large American flag, the stars literally bursting from the corner square, their spiky edges merging into the wall. Sensing that it was the right thing to do, we both nodded, as if bowing to the flag that our grandfather had once fought against, that our mother and father had now embraced for nearly ten years, that we were about to make our own. As my head bobbed up and down, I felt my old life quickly slipping away. I was surrendering myself, not just to a country and a flag, but to a family I'd never really been part of.' (2007: 105-6).

English is employed as both the core of the text, but also as a neutral language that is not particularly concerned with the incongruities of standardised French versus colloquial Kreyòl.

Danticat's short stories and novels are filled with sayings, turns of phrase and references to Haitian culture in its many ranges—from allusions to Vodou religion to the cross-generational bestowing of customs<sup>133</sup> in the form of a loosely translated proverb,<sup>134</sup> or repeated words that start in French but are later explained in English.<sup>135</sup> These are usually italicised, emphasising the immediate translation made by the author and creating a sense of separation from the reader. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the influence of French and Kreyòl in Danticat's writings goes beyond a verbal presence. If Díaz's language subverts the demarcation between intra- and interlingual communication, Danticat's experimentation is found in her intersemiotic use of metaphor and myth.

Myth plays a fundamental role in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Danticat's first novel published in 1994, which started as an autobiographical essay of her move as a child to New York City, but subsequently became a work of fiction concerning the levels of trauma experienced by three generations of Haitian women. The book's two main characters, Sophie Caco and her mother Martine, have to deal with the psychological repercussions of the mother's rape that resulted in the daughter's birth, and the physical and emotional distance that separated them before and after Sophie joined

---

<sup>133</sup> Further examples of the semiotics of inter-generational customs as signs of differing cultural identities can be found in Chapter III, p. 180.

<sup>134</sup> As in the case of this passage from the novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory*: 'Listen. Listen before it passes. *Paròl gin pié zèl*. The words can give wings to your feet' (1994: 234).

<sup>135</sup> These are always found with a subsequent translation of sorts: "'I want to do *dactylo*," I said, "be a secretary.'" (1994: 56).

Martine as a twelve-year-old in New York City. The parallels between this novel and *Brother, I'm Dying* are most evidently found in the figure of Sophie's aunt Atie, who takes care of Sophie in the small Haitian town of Croix-des-Rosets before her trip to New York, and could be interpreted as a female version of Danticat's uncle Joseph. Unlike *Brother, I'm Dying*, male characters in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* are more ornamental than fundamental and are almost always portrayed in a positive light (Martine's partner Marc is shown as a welcoming figure while Sophie's love interest, curiously named Joseph, is constantly affectionate and sympathetic), however, the patriarchal rules and regulations of Haitian society and the masculine violence represented by the state<sup>136</sup> are the tacit frameworks of oppression that permeate the relationships between the four Caco women, around whom the narrative is built.

These customs of subjugation are portrayed by Danticat in the traditional rural practice of 'testing'; in which a mother inserts her fingers in her teenage daughter's vagina to certify that she is still a virgin before wedlock. This is implied to be done so as not to 'shame the family' once the daughter is married. In present-day New York 'testing' represents, on the immediate level of the narrator Sophie, a traumatic event that she is subjected to by her mother on a regular basis upon her arrival. The emotional pain and physical discomfort these check-ups cause Sophie result in her breaking her own hymen with a pestle—an expression of agency, but one which creates further trauma. It is immediately after this scene that Sophie recalls the myth of the 'bleeding woman', first told to her back in Haiti by her aunt Atie. According to the myth,

---

<sup>136</sup> In her essay 'Danticat's Vodou Vernacular of Women's Human Rights', Gwen Bergner draws parallels between Danticat's use of myth and the systematic violations of human rights (mostly of a sexual nature) perpetuated by the Haitian state.

a woman could not stop spontaneously bleeding, to the point where her only alternative was to invoke the Iwa Erzulie<sup>137</sup> to treat her pain:

After her consultation with Erzulie, it became apparent to the bleeding woman what she would have to do. If she wanted to stop bleeding, she would have to give up her right to be a human being. She could choose what to be, a plant or an animal, but she could no longer be a woman.

[...] "Make me a butterfly," she told Erzulie. "Make me a butterfly."

"A butterfly you shall be," said Erzulie.

The woman was transformed and never bled again. (1994: 87-88)

Rather than serving as a merely poetic turn, the implication of symbolic language adds an extra layer of information to Danticat's fiction, helping to define the relationships between characters and the role of memory in narrative creation, in this case, the relationship between the narrator Sophie and the myths bequeathed to her by her immediate family. Danticat does not explicitly translate myth as the source material for *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (in the sense that the story itself is not a reinterpretation of a particular myth), but rather, she borrows concepts and characters from Haitian lore to interact with her own creations. In Sophie's case, myth does not represent a justification for her actions, but rather, part of a conscious tactic of resistance that she later identifies as 'doubling':

I had learned to double while being tested. I would close my eyes and imagine all the pleasant things that I had known. The lukewarm noon breeze through our bougainvillea. Tante Atie's gentle voice blowing over a field of daffodils [...] There were many cases in our history where our ancestors had doubled. Following in the voodoo tradition, most of our presidents were actually one body split in two: part flesh and part shadow. That was the only way they could murder and rape so many people and still go home to play with their children and make love to their wives. [...] After our marriage, whenever Joseph and I were together, I doubled. (1994: 156)

---

<sup>137</sup> Sometimes spelled Erzili or with her full name, Erzulie Freda. She is considered to be the most feminine of Iwas (spirits) and the patron of love, beauty and passion. She is represented with three wedding rings (one for each of her husbands, Damballa, Agwe and Ogoun) and often syncretised with the Virgin Mary.

By recognising 'doubling' as part of a tradition of varied moral standings in which myth prefigures action, Danticat evokes a different kind of double consciousness, emphasising the liminality of cognitive dissonance as both positive and negative depending on the circumstance. Instead of harbouring hatred towards her mother, Sophie recognises that what lies beyond myth is the grander narrative of abuse behind practices such as 'testing'. The reader learns that, back in Haiti, Martine had been expelled from her household after failing 'testing', as she had been raped by a masked man: Sophie's unidentified father (presumably a Tonton Macoute). Trauma and violence are, therefore, an extension of myth, the catalysts of Sophie's own personal history, and an inextricable part of both her mother and her own migration.

The symbolic sway of Erzuline and the significance of colour return to the story after Martine, who had been diagnosed with cancer, dies in her home from 'self-inflicted wounds'. In the conclusion of the narrative, Sophie returns to Haiti with her mother's body and dresses her with red, Martine's favourite colour, which is interpreted as immoral by Western tradition ('Saint Peter won't allow your mother into Heaven in that,' says Martine's lover Marc), but which is carefully chosen by Sophie to symbolise Erzuline, and in her mind, serves to invert the narrative of Martine from victim to victimiser: 'She would look like a Jezebel, hot-blooded Erzulie who feared no men, but rather made them her slaves, raped *them*, and killed *them*. She was the only woman with that power' (1994: 227). In the climactic passages of *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Sophie returns to the cane fields, the scene of her mother's rape, and symbolically 'attacks the cane' suggesting the actions her mother would have taken had she been able to fight back. The linguistic custom of Haitian call-and-response serves as the conclusion to the novel, as Sophie's grandmother tells her:

‘There is always a place where, if you listen closely in the night, you will hear your mother telling a story and at the end of the tale, she will ask you this question: ‘*Ou libéré?*’ Are you free, my daughter?’

My grandmother quickly pressed her fingers over my lips.

‘Now,’ she said, ‘you will know how to answer’. (1994: 234)

It is pertinent to note that symbolism and myth in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, is almost totally oral. The conversations sustained between Sophie in New York and her family in Haiti are crucially enacted not through letters but through cassette tapes—this is due to her aunt and grandmother being illiterate. Yet Danticat constantly questions the diverse levels of literacy beyond the written word, the differences between being well *read* and well *lived*. Upon her return to Haiti, Sophie shows her lack of familiarity with the metaphoric dimensions of language as her grandmother describes a girl’s footsteps ‘like a whip chasing a mule’, a turn of phrase which goes unrecognised by Sophie, who listens closely but hears no whip.

In *Brother, I’m Dying*, however, these linguistic and metaphorical references are not part of the narrative itself,<sup>138</sup> where the almost journalistic, factual, tone of the book replaces Danticat’s usual reliance on the codes of poetic fiction to drive the plot. In the final chapter of *Brother, I’m Dying*, after the death of both her father and uncle, Danticat writes:

After my uncle Joseph died, my father told me that he dreamed of him only once, and never in the small group he pictured around his bed. In my father’s dream, when my uncle calls him from Maxo’s apartment the night he nearly died, my father actually makes it there on time to ride in the ambulance with him and hold his hands as the paramedics drill the tracheotomy hole in his neck. (2007: 268)

---

<sup>138</sup> For further examples, see Chapter I, p. 86 for a brief survey of the uses of myth in *The Farming of Bones* or Chapter III, p. 182 for the role of community and symbolism in *Krik? Krak!*.

Elsewhere in Danticat's work, the elocution of dreams is often a metaphorical representation of another life, which is inexorably linked to what could be construed as reality. Here, however, dreams are equated to an impossible replication of a failed reality. The sudden rawness of death, so poetically explored by Danticat throughout her fiction, is confronted with inevitability and resignation, explicitly suggested by the quote from Paul Auster's *The Invention of Solitude* which serves as an epigraph: 'To begin with death. To work my way back into life, and then, finally, to return to death. Or else: the vanity of trying to say anything about anyone' (1982: 63). Thus, unlike the pointedly references to myth as a narrative tool for her characters in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Danticat uses *Brother, I'm Dying* as a self-reflexive tool to gain perspective on her own narrative language, frequently probing her own storytelling and historiography as truthful methods of reflecting reality. Although classified as a work of non-fiction, the position of *Brother, I'm Dying* in her corpus as a whole allows it to take on the role of a crucial touchstone from which her works of fiction unfold: showing that her narrative language is driven by the stories she wants to shed light on. By doing so, she calls to mind Edward Said's *Reflections on Exile* and his questioning of whether the lost stories of undocumented people should take preponderance over fiction—the tacit tragedy being that, instead of playing the role of an equitable translator, and unlike Sophie's taped communications with her family in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, the author must live with the knowledge that the people being depicted are not always readily able to read their own stories.

Even if the circumstances that drew Danticat and Díaz to construct their own language from the foundations of English are not related, the direct result of the lack of



a centre, the migratory chronicle of their respective families most certainly is. Their story happens to be similar to that of their compatriots who fled Hispaniola to work in the United States, only that, by choosing to articulate their experience through literature, they have to, borrowing a phrase from Homi Bhabha, 'face the void' and adhere to a language (following the rules of structure) or attempt to create a new one (of their own agency), somehow dissociating themselves from other, less literary, members of the diaspora.

The use of what Danticat calls a 'neutral language' should, in cases such as these, act as a virtual 'contact zone'<sup>139</sup> of cultures, directly opposed to the need for national classification and private entitlement. Perhaps these zones are mostly interpreted as material places (from borderland markets to metropolitan museums), but through its usage of language, extraterritorial literature also presents a textual formulation of these very same concepts of hybridity. The use of a hybrid or neutral language, however, is not necessarily an unimpeachable panacea; it too contains tragic properties and instances of miscommunication, explicitly found in the forfeiture of the assimilation of these texts by its place of origin and the limited access to these very same texts by the people described in the stories themselves. In *Create Dangerously*, Danticat recounts a visit to a Kreyòl radio station in Haiti to discuss a self-translation of one of her own short stories:

Translating—retranslating—that story from the original English in which I had written it had been a surreal experience. It was as if the voice in which I write, the voice in which people speak Creole that comes out English on paper, had been released and finally I was writing for people like my Tante Ilyana, people

---

<sup>139</sup> The concept of contact zones was developed by Mary Louise Pratt in her book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* and it refers primarily to social spaces designed for the meeting of disparate cultures.

who did not read, not because they did not have enough time or because they had too many other gadgets and distractions, but because they had never learned how. (2010: 50)

The act of translating a story written in English about a Haitian context is considered by Danticat as a method of retranslation, a different condition when compared to the Dominican-American point of view of Díaz's Yunior, who is, although also acting as a re-translator at times, expressing himself in his primary language. This externalises the image of the translator from the character to the author and denotes a clear transposition of roles that can be read as an added layer of otherness. For the reader, the story is already filtered and the presence of the translator is peripheral to the text. This can result, ultimately, in a loss of immediacy, or the lack of a suspension of disbelief, a fact only redressed when dealing with non-fiction, such as the case of *Brother, I'm Dying*, in which the reader approaches the book with the assumption that these events did indeed happen and these characters went through these vicissitudes *in real life*. The specific case of Haiti's low literacy indexes only adds to the dramatic impossibility of Danticat's role as communicator<sup>140</sup>—it is clear, through her work and in this confession, that her primary audience has never been Kreyòl-speaking Haitians, however much she would want that to be the case. Her audience will therefore, at best, see universal resemblance of what ultimately are very human (and humane) stories, and at worst, read her work as a strand of exoticism or misery tourism; nonetheless, this double translation implies that there will always be at least two degrees of separation between reader and text.

---

<sup>140</sup> While the literacy indexes in the Dominican Republic are much higher than those of Haiti (91.9% to 60.7% according to the UNDP's Human Development Report, 2006), the celebrity status of both authors could be said to be contrasting, as Danticat's fame within Haitian literary circles is overwhelmingly positive, compared to Díaz's controversial image in the Dominican Republic and within the diaspora.

This conscious separation between reader and text falls into the sphere of translation studies, and it posits Danticat and Díaz as examples of two different approaches towards the reception and the receptors of their texts. The issue of unbalanced transactions between languages can therefore be related to Lawrence Venuti's theoretical work and his development of the dialectical opposition between domestication and foreignisation. Venuti primarily analyses issues of power inequality that result in exploitative methods of suppressing the visibility of the translator by the illusory search for transparency and easy readability. It is important to note that Venuti's theory stems from the current state of interlingual translation to and from the English language, but it is nonetheless applicable to the use of English as a 'neutral language'. According to Venuti, this search for linguistic immediacy and fluency:

Masks a domestication of the source text that is appropriative and potentially imperialistic, putting the foreign to domestic uses which, in British and American cultures, extend the global hegemony of English, but which in any culture whatsoever, whether major or minor, is likely to reinforce the status quo by preserving the existing linguistic and cultural hierarchies. (2012: 246)

He proposes that these inequalities can be addressed and even countered by using the tactic of 'foreignisation'—which chiefly implies breaking the conventions of the target language while being able to preserve its intended meaning, an approach to translation which strives to recognise the differences found in the source text by 'deviating from the values, beliefs, and representations that currently hold sway in the translating language.' (2012: 246). This distinction between domestication and foreignisation is crucial when sketching the differences found in the inner workings of the type of language used by Díaz and Danticat in their work, which is not to say their work belongs to opposite sides of the dichotomy. On the one hand, Danticat's language

clearly shows examples of foreignisation in the use of Kreyòl sayings and short phrases, immediately translated to highlight the foreignness of a different cultural register. On the other, Díaz's refusal to italicise Spanish words could be construed to be closer to a method of domestication—yet the power redistribution is not necessarily one of accretion from Spanish to English, but rather a subversive method of making English less readable. However, it could also be argued that, by using English as the Core and Spanish, French or Kreyòl as satellite languages, Díaz and Danticat both unwittingly participate in exercises of domestication. In this ambivalent (often fluctuating) sense, the reader's role in regard of the reception of the text becomes an issue of allegiance that ultimately escapes the author.

If domestication consists in moving the source text closer to the target audience and foreignisation a way of forcing the audience to move towards the text, then the authorial position of Danticat and Díaz can also be construed to be dependent on the material space of their books and the resulting interpretations by their readership. The levels of understanding dependent on the reader's position towards the text are almost endless, but we can begin an analysis by attempting to divide them into four separate categories each with their own sub-levels. First, the members of the Dominican or Haitian diaspora who see their stories mirrored in the narratives, who understand most of the (often bi or trilingual) language and the intricate references, and who may disagree with the full veracity of the depictions found in the narrative. Second, the readers who access these books in English and may or may not be aware of certain aspects of the history of Hispaniola, previous representations of the diasporas and/or have a certain level of familiarity with the other languages and references employed. Third, the specific case of English-speaking readers throughout the world, who

approach this book in its original version but whose monolingualism is further exacerbated by the inclusion of glossaries (such as that of the British Faber & Faber edition of *Oscar Wao*). And finally, those readers receiving the translated version of the texts, ironically, including Díaz's Spanish-speaking monolingual audience or Danticat's non-English-speaking Haitian audience. Of course, all these divisions can be further subdivided or indeed amalgamated depending on the reader's own levels of linguistic or cultural familiarity with the source text. This, perhaps, is the ultimate evidence that even when extraterritorial literature escapes the authors, it is still in constant movement, and open to a wide range of individual interpretations.

The never-ending classifications of audience reception and the tailoring of language outside the source text is often transmitted by the publishers rather than the authors, yet it does not respond solely to issues of marketing and material consumption. In her 2013 book *Against World Literature*, Emily Apter questions the notion of literary studies as anti-capitalist critique; she argues 'it insufficiently questions what it means to "have" a literature or to lay claim to aesthetic property.' (2013: 3). This primarily concerns the reception and dissemination of texts, but it also influences their creation. Issues of material ownership are indeed crucial when questioning the actual position of literature in societies, and these debates should not be avoided. If one were to ask whether Junot Díaz's output belonged to the Dominican Republic or the United States, the answer would be: to both or to neither of them. This is recurrently mirrored by the linguistic relationship between Core and periphery zones. In the example of Faber & Faber's British edition of *Oscar Wao*, their decision to create a glossary to accompany the source text does not only weaken its aims, it also manipulates and reconfigures its identity by minoritising the book (and its author's)

position in the global sphere and creates the same sense of Otherness that Díaz and Danticat aim to expunge in their textual content.<sup>141</sup> These methods of exclusion are quite far from Díaz and Danticat's encouragement of their audience's critical reading, which so often in its narrative resists cultural dominance and knowingly critiques the production of imposing narratives.

However, the marketing tactics employed by their publishers precludes the reading of the actual books: the majority of Danticat and Díaz's rhetoric is in their work, and in their conscious decision to keep depicting characters who are not necessarily of a literary disposition (as opposed to the overwhelming tendency of contemporary fiction towards solipsism and exclusively 'writing about writers') which, in itself, represents a constructive method of incarnating the distinctiveness of migratory stories by not explicitly putting their own life stories as writers in the U.S. at the forefront. This approach represents a uniqueness embedded in a collective understanding that is based upon individual particularities shaped by larger restrictions and almost always entails a combination of circumstances that are seldom replicated, and therefore resistant to generalisations. As Danticat and Díaz show in the varying degrees of linguistic construction and obstruction found in their stories, there is not a singular metanarrative of the migratory experience, either in literary expression or in everyday life, and this should be apparent to any reader who engages with one of their books. These, in turn, are rooted in a clear 'neutral language'—a

---

<sup>141</sup> This is made explicitly visual when comparing the U.S. Soho Press with the British Abacus releases of Danticat's fiction. The former chooses a clean cover focusing on the titles while the latter places pictures of Haitian girls, shamelessly exoticising and gendering the work found within. Likewise, the 2009 Faber & Faber edition of *Oscar Wao*, shows a little boy in pensive mood who does not resemble the description found within the book. An analytic discussion of this topic, however, belongs to a more material reading, which escapes the aims of this thesis.

method of border thinking that allows the content to take preponderance, and subsequently, serves to open up further extra-literary discussions of a political vein, such as the theories of language proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

### **Deterritorialising The Extraterritorial**

In their 1986 analysis of Franz Kafka's work entitled *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari develop the basis of their theory of language localisation. According to them, Kafka, culturally displaced in Prague and not feeling a sense of belonging with the Austro-Hungarian and German status quo or with the local Jewish communities, crafted a strategy of expression by 'becoming minor'.<sup>142</sup> Deleuze and Guattari believe that minorities are defined and configured by the majorities through social oppression, and are therefore still embedded in any hegemonic worldview. 'Becoming minor', thus, implies siding with minoritarian causes faced with the unevenness of power, even when one does not necessarily wholly belong to these groups. In the specific case of 'minor literature' and Kafka's language, they suggest:

The problem of expression is staked out by Kafka not in an abstract and universal fashion but in relation to those literatures that are considered minor, for example, the Jewish literature of Warsaw and Prague. A minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language. But the first characteristic of minor literature in any case is that in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization. (1986: 16)

This larger process of deterritorialisation is further expanded in their magnum opus *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (in both volumes *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand*

---

<sup>142</sup> It is important to note that this theory of 'minor' literature is not necessarily linked with minority groups as we know them, and will henceforth be referred to with quotation marks.

*Plateaus*), it was originally proposed as a psychoanalytical theory to refer to the fluidity of subjectivity in 20<sup>th</sup>-century capitalist societies, but it has since been adopted by globalisation theorists such as Arjun Appadurai, Nestor García Canclini and Anthony Giddens to refer to issues of the local versus the global. The main problem of deterritorialisation arises when the subject is dislocated from its immediate surroundings, and becomes dependent on international networks of power far from the reach or influence of individuals. In the specific case of language in Kafka's time, however, Deleuze and Guattari identify Prague German as a deterritorialised language appropriate for 'strange and minor uses' (1986: 17). Interestingly enough, they see a clear parallel between this language and African-American inflections of English in the early 1970s—perhaps the clearest sign that Danticat and Díaz's own means of communication, if not wholly deterritorialised, was at least influenced by a deterritorialised language in their multiple readings of Toni Morrison's work, to name but one example.

To exemplify the usage of language in 'minor literature', Deleuze and Guattari posit a methodology based upon Henri Gobard's tetralinguistic model, which divides language into vernacular, vehicular, referential and mythic. Vernacular language, according to Gobard, is tied to the land, to territories, and is used mostly by rural communities; vehicular is the language of bureaucracy, of urbanity and commercial exchange; referential is a language based on cultural reterritorialization, a language of sense and culture; while mythic language revolves around the horizon of cultures,



exercising a sort of spiritual or religious reterritorialization.<sup>143</sup> Transposing these models to extraterritorial literature exposes their inherent incompatibility: Díaz often uses referential language in his allusions to science fiction and Latin American culture, but he also engages in mythic allusions to curses (the *fukú*) and supernatural forces—his affection for comic books would not have it any other way. Likewise, Danticat often borrows concepts and legends not merely from reterritorialized Kreyòl expressions but also from Haiti's enormously rich mythology, which is itself very much related to vernacular language. Much like Steiner's modes of translation or Venuti's foreignisation versus domestication, this tetralingustic model is based upon clearly demarcated instructions that seldom meet, while extraterritorial language can move freely between any of these four categories.

The second characteristic of what Deleuze and Guattari term 'minor literature' is the overwhelming presence of political rhetoric. 'In major literatures, in contrast, the individual concern (familial, marital, and so on) joins with other no less individual concerns, the social milieu serving as a mere environment or a background' (1986: 17). We can see the dislocation between the idea of personal literature and social literature being exclusive counterpoints here. However, the clear examples of Danticat and Díaz basing their own narratives and their socio-political impulses on very personal stories show that they do not fit easily into Deleuze and Guattari's opposition between 'major' and 'minor' literatures. This shows, perhaps, the risk of using a single case study to refer to generalities: Deleuze and Guattari see Kafka as the epitome of a 'minor author'

---

<sup>143</sup> 'The spatiotemporal categories of these languages differ sharply: vernacular language is here; vehicular language is everywhere; referential language is over there; mythic language is beyond.' Deleuze and Guattari, 1986: 24.

and extrapolate from selective circumstances<sup>144</sup> related to his own biography an entire theoretical framework, instead of taking a comparative approach that could help establish networks of communal rhetoric. The variants of immigrant experiences, and ‘minor’ experiences are anything but homogenous, and, as such, their approach towards individual concerns tends to be exactly that: individual.

Perhaps more interestingly, the third characteristic involves ‘the collective assemblage of enunciation’ of ‘minor literature’, which Deleuze and Guattari attribute to the lack in numbers of gifted authors who write this ‘minor literature’. They argue that this scarcity of talent is beneficial in the sense that hegemonic literature produces the work of individuals, while ‘minor literature’ inherently constitutes an act of communal action. This could also be applied to Díaz’s attempts to recreate the colloquial language of the Dominican diaspora and Danticat’s reflections on the Haitian experience in Hispaniola, in flux, and in the United States. This concept of resistance, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is opposed to the tenuous idea of a single national consciousness (which will always involve a degree of siding with the establishment’s pre-conceived visions) and serves as a platform for revolutionary enunciation. Expanding upon this concept, they write that ‘minor literature’

is literature that produces an active solidarity in spite of scepticism; and if the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility. (1986: 17)

---

<sup>144</sup> Such as the references to ‘cramped space’ (as a clear nod to the living conditions of Jews in Prague) forcing the immediate connection between individuals and politics, which could be construed to mean the position of any ‘minor author’ on the fringes of canonical literature, but is nonetheless very specific to the case of Kafka.

The terminology used here to denote the possibility of a new community does not imply the constitution of a society with homogenising values, but rather, a zone in which specificity is not a guiding factor. Looking beyond Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari argue that ‘minor no longer designates specific literatures but the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature’ (1986: 18). This is, of course, an idealised image that fails to recognise the problematic outlined throughout this (and the following) chapter relating to the present and future of extraterritorial literature: the myriad challenges faced when these ‘minor literatures’ are forged in a position of relative privilege and are subsequently adopted into canonical concepts of mainstream acceptance.<sup>145</sup>

Relating to the scope of so-called ‘world literature’ and its uneven hierarchy, Pascale Casanova saw the root of this system as being ‘characterized by the opposition between the great national spaces, which are also the oldest—and, accordingly, the best endowed—and those literary spaces that have more recently appeared and that are poor by comparison’ (2007: 83). According to her theory, the imbalanced value of traditionally literary nations relies on and could be offset by translations as a means of redistributing capital. For a ‘minor literature’ author writing in a lesser-known language, having his or her work translated into English, French or Spanish is seen as not only a mark of quality but also a significant boost both in prestige and in material reward. Likewise, an author from a majority language seen worthy enough to be translated into smaller languages is underpinning his or her influence over other parts

---

<sup>145</sup> In the most brilliantly explicit way possible, this was done to Edwidge Danticat and Junot Díaz by arguably the two most influential mainstream African-American public figures of the last twenty years: Oprah Winfrey’s backing of the former and Barack Obama’s of the latter. See: Chapter III, p. 198.

of the world. The curious case of Díaz and Danticat operating from English and being translated from said language to Italian or Korean, let alone French or Spanish, denotes the impossibility of their 'minor literature' credentials in the larger global scope of literature—Danticat's spare use of Kreyòl aside, they are inescapably part of the Northern Hemisphere's literary system and its resulting unequal exchanges.

However, yet another layer of complexity arises when taking into account issues of structure and agency. The individuality and identity of both books and authors are, according to Édouard Glissant in *Poetics of Relation*, built in relation to and not in isolation from a cultural context, in this particular case this would descend into discussions of a postcolonial vein and the correlation between Caribbean creolisation and U.S. multiculturalism, which are recognised by Glissant himself as parallel processes of a similar ilk. If each migratory experience is unique, there is no 'right way' of depicting it. There is simply the depiction and the hope it will resonate with readers. What is clear is that there is no single standardised 'global literature', and there will not be one as long as barriers of communication (in other words, language) are still present. This is why use of a 'third language', such as that found in Díaz and Danticat's work, represents an advancement towards that end, which it must be added, should not have a homogenising purpose, instead relying on the addition of assorted references from varying sources to achieve its full potential.

Language and literature can also become, through narrative and extra-narrative methods, the basis of political engagement. The core component in Díaz and Danticat's work is indeed English, and with it comes the history of the language that stretches far beyond the United States and involves a history of other colonial proceedings. The

question would be whether English itself can remain the primary language of the United States, or if the principles of migration upon which it was founded will inevitably bring about another 'linguistic revolution' (which arguably is happening on many fronts already).<sup>146</sup> As has been previously argued in this thesis, it is clear that Danticat and Díaz cannot shoulder the entire cultural and historical weight of Haiti, the Dominican Republic and the United States at the same time, but any attempt to transcend the symbolic into political action should not be a matter of shouldering the weight, that is a given in any context, but of how to decipher it in a conscious manner; depicting the injustices of history being a method of, if not lessening that weight, then at least putting it in the balance.

Steiner viewed the affinity of certain writers for multilinguistic approaches as a symptom of 'the more general problem of a lost centre' (1967: 34). Indeed, the external 'centre' is a crucial matter to employ a critique of extraterritorial literature, but the fact that Danticat and Díaz are writing in English does not necessarily represent a symptom of the imbalance of cultural influence in the region; their linguistic approach is based on undermining language itself and by doing so, questioning the construction of pre-established norms of cultural imperialism. If the notion of so-called 'American fiction' includes immigrant authors and adopts so-called 'marginal voices' to its canon, then it would ask immigrant authors to play the same role Haitians and Dominicans play in the big metropolises of the United States—still on the fringes, without any clear participation in larger communal projects. The 'loss of a centre' that Steiner referred to might be a point of departure. However, we must always remember this 'centre' was originally composed by silencing forces—the repression of dissent, the conscious

---

<sup>146</sup> More on this subject can be found in the Epilogue of this thesis, p. 225.

obscuring of history, the upkeep of a Eurocentric worldview that allows a minor, marginal status to certain voices at best and systematically represses them at worst.

This new extraterritorial literature actively eludes the desire to classify. It should reinterpret preconceived notions of language and culture to create an alternative 'third language', as in Díaz's dynamic amalgam of Spanish, English and geekspeak. It should seek, like Danticat, to portray social struggle and the injustices of dominant structures. It must put history on trial by reassembling the shards of memory and filling the blank pages. Its incongruences and contradictions, which are mostly those of literature itself (a term that must also be questioned), need to be constantly critiqued by employing different theoretical scopes applicable to each case in particular. This is the strength of 'border thinking': a persistent critique of the systems, notions and tools in place where one's own agency is not emphasised in the ownership of language (as Derrida's affirmation would have it), but rather in the re-structuring of narratives. This type of language aims, if anything, to show the interconnectedness of the world. It is an approach that is engaging instead of detached. Extraterritorial literature shows that current economic models of globalisation versus superficial cultural isolation have to be questioned—the former for its imperial homogenisation and the latter for its parochial simplicity. They represent approaches that over-simplify and essentialise complex transactions—the flip side of extraterritorial literature, which should, ultimately, reveal and celebrate this complexity, treasuring Toni Morrison's dictum of 'reaching towards the ineffable' by acting as a knowingly incomplete, yet nonetheless vital stance towards the dramatic convolutions of our contemporary condition. This is a condition that starts with the individual, but is inevitably linked to

and performed within the parameters of community—in Díaz and Danticat's case, thoroughly aligned with the concept of diasporic identities.

### Chapter III: Identity

'All borders are explanations of identity. We construct borders, literally and figuratively, to fortify our sense of who we are; and we cross them in search of who we might become. They are philosophies of space, credibility contests, latitudes of neurosis, signatures to the social contract, soothing containments, scars.'

Frances Stonor Saunders, *Where on earth are you?* (2016)

#### Life Along The Borderline

The identities of immigrant authors, crafted both through their personal historiography and the subsequent creation of their characters, are often a dialectic exercise between the collective and the individual. The analysis of extraterritorial literature, with its inherent complexities, presents us with several difficulties that can only be simplified from the departure point of single evaluations (which can be later set into a comparative approach that includes other experiences). Even though overarching theories of diaspora and decolonialism might serve to contour this framework, we cannot consider extraterritorialism as an epistemological approach without first focusing on the specificities of each author whose background and rhetoric are, though comparable, unique. Unlike the rooted national literature of the past, contemporary extraterritorial literature is born out of a disaffiliation from pre-constructed classifications—this rejection of clear demarcation is at the core of its potential to critique the status quo from the margins, and, ultimately, to persistently scrutinise itself. If history and its silences serve as a field of enunciation for extraterritorial authors, and if this articulation is performed through a third language, both the process and the resulting reconstruction ultimately become affirmations of identity. This



chapter will analyse the different methods of identity creation and reaffirmation executed by extraterritorial authors in flux—identities which are shaped and expressed through literary texts which, when enunciated through public speech, can often resolve in acts of communal action.

In the case of Edwidge Danticat and Junot Díaz, these lexes of identity contain an array of subsections analogous to the history of their home island and their current residence in the United States. Issues of race, gender and nationality are always negotiated and articulated through their distinctive fluid approach. Their work, like the work created by many other immigrant authors or members of a determined diaspora, constantly returns to the anxiety of being dislocated from both the present and from its place of assembly. Yet the reception from a sizeable part of the literary community in the United States has attempted to integrate Díaz and Danticat and their discourse into the local canon with accolades which might seem inclusive at first, yet carry the unmistakable elements of colonial tradition in them. Assimilation is an act not solely restricted to individuals; it is also a conundrum for larger entities, and as such, any analysis of Danticat and Díaz's literary output must be understood within the principles of cultural decolonisation, while also acknowledging the possibilities and incongruities of what Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein called 'Americanity'<sup>147</sup>—the principles of which were first proposed in the 1990s as a unifying method of cross-hegemonic inclusion—a concept that seemed fitting after the rise of 'Latino literature' in the United States but one which is now explicitly threatened by the current political rhetoric.

---

<sup>147</sup> Quijano, A and Wallerstein, I, 1992. *Americanity as a concept, or the Americas in the modern world-system*. International Journal of Social Sciences, No. 134, Nov. 1992, UNESCO, Paris. pp. 549-557.

This chapter will primarily question the dichotomy of acceptance and rejection through the creation of identity. It will use the intricate and plural history of diaspora as a starting point by contesting terminology and positing both Díaz and Danticat as incarnations of the transcendence of a singular migratory narrative. It will argue that their own individual journeys are irreducible and impossible to simplify—going beyond a single flight from Hispaniola to Miami or New York and encompassing at least five hundred years of dislocation, forced exile and slavery. It will attempt to show how their textual identities are built upon a vast, complex foundation of racial and cultural contestations, mirrored by their home island and its relationship to the United States, by placing a specific focus on excerpts from their debut short story collections (*Krik? Krak!* and *Drown*, both released in 1996) and the subsequent attempts of external assimilation into the United States canon enacted by the media and public figures of authority upon their publication.

Throughout their work, both Danticat and Díaz display generational disparities in immigrant experiences and the imagined borders of nationalism and linguistic affiliation these beget, yet they do not merely restrict their ideas to their immediate surroundings; both authors also perform the role of active agents in current political debates related to their island of birth. The second part of this chapter will examine Danticat and Diaz's political discourse, the reception of their concepts of identity from a variety of academic scopes, and the relationship between their public activism and their fiction, which often aims to expose the structural injustices of Hispaniola by relating it to the system they inhabit at present time. As Díaz himself stated in a recent interview: 'to live in a moment such as ours does not only require critical thinking but

also critical activity,<sup>148</sup> and guided by that ethos, this chapter will show how both authors use their privileged position as ‘American authors’ to engage in contemporary political events such as the judicial imposition of the Sentencia TC 0168-13<sup>149</sup> in 2013 in the Dominican Republic and to help disseminate information related to activist causes derived from such events.

Finally, having established the terms on which Danticat and Díaz’s confection of identities is portrayed through their work and in the public sphere, this chapter will ask if the power relations found in cultural transactions and the conditioning of literature by market forces can influence and detract from the work found within material books. It will do so by examining Stuart Hall’s concept of ‘difference’ in order to examine the multiple levels of negative discrimination from which a subversive articulation of collective resistance can be built and, ultimately, it will consider if extraterritorial literature can truly represent the voice of the margins whilst being incipiently canonised into the mainstream at the same time.

### **From Diaspora to Where?**

In his 2001 essay ‘The Uses of Diaspora’, Brent Hayes Edwards lays the foundations for what would become his platform of analysis on cross-cultural exchange between black authors of different nationalities in the interwar period. Referencing the work of Khachig Tölölyan<sup>150</sup> and James Clifford,<sup>151</sup> he examines the incompatibility of

---

<sup>148</sup> Del Castillo, 2016. *Pulitzer Prize winner Junot Díaz takes a phone call from Paul*. Literary Manhattan. <http://www.literarymanhattan.org/2016/10/pulitzer-prize-winner-junot-diaz-takes-a-call-from-paul/> [last accessed: 10/11/2016].

<sup>149</sup> See: Introduction, p. 42.

<sup>150</sup> Specifically Tölölyan’s essay ‘Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment’, taken from the journal *Diaspora*, which Tölölyan himself

terminology synonymous with his preferred 'diaspora' and calls for a return to the original definition of the term—often confused and substituted with 'exile', 'expatriation', 'transnationality' and 'post-coloniality'. For Edwards, diaspora is a method of inclusion, drawing connections which are not solely restricted to a single race-driven narrative but rather encompass the long history of communities in flux. Expanding upon the theories of diaspora originally postulated by George Shepperson in the 1960s,<sup>152</sup> he evokes the historical nexuses between what are considered to be the three 'classic' diasporas (Jewish, Greek and Armenian) and the wide-ranging African diaspora, aligning it with notions of collective memory, uprooted communities and utopic returns and persistently defending the term from any semantic deviations. He argues:

[...] diaspora points to difference not only internally (the ways transnational black groupings are fractured by nation, class, gender, sexuality, and language) but also externally: in appropriating a term so closely associated with Jewish thought, we are forced to think not in terms of some closed or autonomous system of African dispersal but explicitly in terms of a complex past of forced

---

founded in 1991. It proposes that the term 'diaspora' acts as the continuation of 'dispersion' thanks to the rapid change in discourse of the previous three decades, and updates the semantic domain of the term to establish a new method of understanding dispersed communities.

<sup>151</sup> Focusing on articulations of diaspora in Paul Gilroy's analysis of black British communities and their connection to anti-Zionist Judaism, James Clifford's essay 'Diasporas' attempts to show the cosmopolitan networks through which a comparative study of diasporas can be constructed and why the reactive language of 'posts' (as in postcolonial or postnational) is ultimately incompatible with historiographical discourses of diaspora. These ideas would be further expanded and updated in his 2013 book *Returns: Becoming Indigenous in the Twentieth Century*.

<sup>152</sup> Of particular interest to Edwards is Shepperson's splitting of the term Pan-African into two: a capital lettered 'Pan Africanism' which denotes the history of the internationalist movement and a small-lettered 'pan-Africanism' which contains a diverse grouping of minor communal movements. According to Edwards, it is this intervention, shown in a paper titled 'The African Abroad of the African Diaspora', which constitutes the introduction of the term 'diaspora' into the study of black cultural politics.

migrations and racialization—what Earl Lewis has called a history of ‘overlapping diasporas.’ (2001: 64)

The concept of ‘overlapping diasporas’ is a recurrent theme in the shared history of the American continent, as drastically different migratory patterns stemming from other continents have become part of the past and current configuration of its nation states with varying degrees of legitimation within those same states.<sup>153</sup> Yet, the contact zones in which these movements meet and the resulting embodiments are far less clear. When speaking of individuals such as Díaz or Danticat, one could trace through their personal history the intersecting of at least five different diasporas between them—diasporas within diasporas, as it were. Their upbringing would place them inside the Dominican and Haitian communities established in the United States (always divided by language, racial segregation, and historical quarrels which never truly facilitate the concept of a Hispaniolan Diaspora); both of which are also contentiously part of the Latin American and Caribbean diasporas (in their Hispanophone, Francophone or Anglophone variants); finally, both authors also consider themselves inheritors of the larger cultural heirlooms of the African diaspora in the United States.<sup>154</sup> If shared history and cultural adherence are two establishing points of a singular diaspora, the complexity of these contested divisions and the

---

<sup>153</sup> Sketching a comparative study of migratory movements in the American continent (from the Afro-Ecuadorian communities of Esmeraldas to the Welsh settlements of Y Wladfa in Patagonia) would inevitably involve dealing with dialectics such as forced migration versus economic migration or racialised exclusion versus self-imposed ostracisation, and the subsequent adaptation or dislocation of particular communities from grander nation-building projects.

<sup>154</sup> This is a recurring notion in Díaz’s and Danticat’s work, and one which is explicitly mentioned by Díaz referring to the denial of black identity in an interview with Danticat published by BOMB Magazine: ‘I try to foreground the Dominican example in order to explore how general and pernicious this is throughout the African Diaspora. [...] It’s one of the great silences of our people—no one really wants to talk about how much a role anti-black self-hatred has in defining what we call ‘our cultures.’ But the Dominican example for me helps unlock the other examples. It’s a key, not a lock.’ (Danticat, 2014).

individuality of experiences are further complicated by the matter of race, and Edwards is fairly succinct on why the term should encompass histories far beyond a singular racial narrative. In that sense, the sheer fact of belonging to one diaspora immediately makes the individual adhere to a reconfiguration of their entire outlook on the world, not solely restricted to its own niche. He reinforces this point by quoting C. L. R. James:

The black students believe that black studies concerns them and black people alone. But that is a mistake. Black studies mean the intervention of a neglected area of studies that are essential to the understanding of ancient and modern society [...] Black studies require a complete reorganization of the intellectual life and historical outlook of the United States, and world civilization as a whole. (James in Edwards, 2001: 57)

Edwards' text serves as a solid resource for sketching the contested terminology surrounding diaspora with a remarkable variety of cross-disciplinary references while scrutinising any divergences from the term. His main point of contention in the essay, however, is with the case of Paul Gilroy's widely standardised definition of the term in his 1993 book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Often considered as the starting point of a modern transnational focus in black cultural criticism, Gilroy uses the knowingly maritime term 'Black Atlantic' to refer to a particular type of irreversible diaspora: namely, the communities which were directly affected by the triangular route of the Atlantic slave trade.<sup>155</sup> By charting the transnational routes of slavery, Gilroy postulated that the concept of diaspora, traditionally thought of as a method of classification based on common origin, can also be driven by hybridity and serve to disrupt the cultural nationalism of colonial thought. In the years that followed the publication of *The Black Atlantic*, the popularisation and

---

<sup>155</sup> That is, the ties that bind Africa, Britain and the United States, which for Gilroy are not merely commercial, but crucially, compose an intellectual system of exchange and a historical nexus relevant to the construction of black identities.

acceptance of its terminology as a replacement for diaspora is interpreted by Edwards as a negative approach. The risk, according to Edwards, is that:

The term 'Black Atlantic' loses the broad range of the term diaspora, without even replacing it with a contextualized history of transnational cultures in the Western hemisphere. [...] I would argue that it is precisely the term diaspora, in the interventionist sense I have sketched here, that would allow us to think beyond such limiting geographic frames, and without reliance on an obsession with origins. (2001: 63)

Indeed, confining the entirety of a particular diaspora to the limits of the Atlantic trade not only omits the rest of the world from the vast array of internationalist dialogues between Africa, Europe and America, but it significantly restricts the term for future practice, certainly in the wide-ranging scope of extraterritorial literature. Perhaps a better definition for differing types of diaspora is not found within geographical (read: territorial) demarcations, but rather in historical terms. Elsewhere in his text, Edwards references the historiographical work carried out by Joseph Harris and Locksley Edmondson in relation to the different sub-sections of diaspora as terminology:

They suggest that we periodize the African diaspora to distinguish between an initial history of migration and 'involuntary diaspora' (both inside Africa and through the Arab and European slave trades) and the subsequent transnational formation of a 'mobilized diaspora,' a phenomenon particular to the twentieth century. (2001: 55)

It is at this juncture that Edwards uses the term 'diaspora' in a manner that is compatible with extraterritorial literature—as a series of interconnected mobilisations which (though comparable) remain idiosyncratic in their natures. Although part of the latter 'mobilised diaspora', Díaz and Danticat are keenly aware of the history of 'involuntary diaspora', and the concept runs through their work both tacitly (a ghostly presence in all of Danticat's fiction and her depiction of Afro-Haitian customs and

sayings)<sup>156</sup> and explicitly (as the genesis of character dislocation in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, *Drown* and *This is How You Lose Her*). Moving on from Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*, Edwards identifies this need for the recognition of a plurality of experiences through the work of Stuart Hall and the theory of 'articulation':

Hall, following Gramsci, contends that ideology must be considered the key site of struggle over competing articulations. In a transnational circuit, then, articulation offers the means to account for the diversity of black 'takes' on diaspora, which Hall himself explicitly begins to theorize in the late 1980s as a frame of cultural identity determined not through 'return' but through difference: 'not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference.' (2001: 60)

For Edwards, Hall's concept of 'articulation' (itself derived from Marx via Althusser and Laclau) means not merely enunciation but also, in the anatomical sense of the word, a connection to find 'difference within unity', combining the structural and the discursive while being aware of the cultural resistance found in societies structured in dominance. In the case of immigrant experiences, the term diaspora might act as an anchor from which the anxiety of fitting in is eased and substituted by a plethora of belongings, yet diaspora (although closely linked) can only be the starting point for extraterritoriality. The analysis in this chapter will therefore proceed from diaspora's decentred and dislocated frame to focus on the complex individuality of each author before dealing with the even more multifaceted frameworks of communal identities. Edwards establishes a similar approach towards the intricacies of studying diaspora by using the term '*décalage*' (reading against the grain of a phrase coined by Léopold

---

<sup>156</sup> Danticat's relationship to myth and folklore has been analysed in Chapter II (p. 142), but it is curious to note that, other than his reference to the *fukú americanus*, Díaz's references to Vodou, Santería and other Afro-American religious traditions play an almost decorative role in his work. These are found sporadically, such as the passing reference in 'Drown' to Eshu (1996: 21), the messenger of all Orishas, and do not at all compare to the more substantial meaning in Danticat's corpus.



Senghor), <sup>157</sup> which itself is a translation-proof word roughly meaning ‘gap,’ ‘discrepancy,’ or ‘interval’. For Edwards, ‘*décalage*’ ‘indicates the reestablishment of a prior unevenness or diversity; it alludes to the taking away of something that was added in the first place, something artificial, a stone or piece of wood that served to fill some gap or to rectify some imbalance’ (2001: 65). This which cannot be transferred or exchanged between black diasporas, conscious of the disjointed limitations of a distant utopian unity.

Edwards summons the paradox of ‘*décalage*’ for his own ends—to chart the connections between black diasporas (in his specific case, between Francophone and Anglophone authors of the interwar period) much like Gilroy chose the Black Atlantic to refer to the triangular migration between Africa, the New World and his native England. But I would like to posit the concept of extraterritoriality as the natural progression to these terms and these dialogues. Indeed, a question that was not explicitly raised either by Edwards or Gilroy was: what would happen if these linguistic barriers and cultural untranslatability found elocution in a third language. In the case of Díaz and Danticat, this third language is the language of extraterritoriality: An amalgam of experiences which happens to have the English language as its superficial conduit, yet carries through it the history and culture of at least four different tongues. But this is not yet the full expression of the overlapping of diasporas—analysed separately both Danticat and Díaz chart, at length, the idiosyncrasies of their own upbringings—it is

---

<sup>157</sup> ‘*Le différend entre Négro-Américains et Négro-Africains est plus léger malgré les apparences. Il s’agit, en réalité, d’un simple décalage—dans le temps et dans l’espace.*’ [Despite appearances, the dispute between Negro-Americans and Negro-Africans is more slight. In reality it involves a simple *décalage*—in time and in space.] Senghor in Edwards, 2001: 65.

only through a comparative extraterritorial approach (itself acting as a temporary bridge for reading 'décalage') that we can get a glimpse of what could be. But before that happens one must first ask what diaspora<sup>158</sup> means to both authors, and to sketch the limits between community and individuality in their work.

### **The Uses of Identity:**

#### **Self-construction in Edwidge Danticat's 'Caroline's Wedding' and Junot Diaz's 'How To Date A Brown Girl (Black Girl, White Girl, or Halfie)'**

Released in 1996, two years after her debut novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Edwidge Danticat's first short story collection *Krik? Krak!* is a loosely knotted book whose unifying thread is the multiplicity of struggles found in the experiences of Haitian individuals within a larger, often mobile, community. A very particular care seems to have been placed in the progression of all nine stories, which act almost as a metaphor for different stages of grief and migration. Key to this thematic are the opening and the closing stories; they both offer contrasting portrayals of the progressive junctures of migratory trajectories; from the extreme struggle of departure, to the privilege obtained with the passing of time. 'Children of the Sea' begins the book with the image of a precarious boatful of immigrants attempting to survive the journey from Haiti to the United States, while 'Caroline's Wedding' ends the collection questioning the concept of settlement and naturalisation. It is in this final story where issues of diaspora and identity bargaining are explicitly scrutinised in a variety of ways, as language, food, religion, superstitions and, crucially, official papers become points of

---

<sup>158</sup> A term which, it must be added, has changed radically over the last decade and has also become associated to the language of international development, often serving as a homogenising keyword to iron out and simplify the differences meticulously observed by Edwards and Hall.

contention and symbols of affirmation, giving, in turn, a sense of belonging not only to the characters themselves but also to the communal definition of diaspora.

In 'Caroline's Wedding', naturalisation papers are seen as a confirmation of an identity bestowed by an external source, as the symbolic power of a passport transcends the sphere of mere legality and influences the individual's self assessment of belonging. These papers are not merely social contracts, they are objects of assertion which delineate generational disparities while symbolising the redemption of past struggles. In the opening paragraphs of the story, the narrator, Grace, a first generation Haitian-American living in Brooklyn, recognises the importance of a tangible nationality as means of personal security:

At the post office on Flatbush Avenue, I had to temporarily trade in my naturalization certificate for a passport application. Without the certificate, I suddenly felt like unclaimed property. When my mother was three months pregnant with my younger sister, Caroline, she was arrested in a sweatshop raid and spent three days in an immigration jail. In my family, we have always been very anxious about our papers. (1996: 140)

The previous arrest of Grace's mother Hermine has direct implications in the birth of her younger (Stateside-born) sister Caroline, who was born without her left forearm, a trait attributed by the family lore to the shots of sleeping drugs given to Hermine during her three-day incarceration. Much like in the rest of her work, Danticat uses a traumatic event as a narrative axis from which the interpersonal relationships between her three main characters are defined. But she also shows that events such as these can have different ramifications and interpretations: Caroline lacking a limb is understood by Hermine as the main reason why she is settling for less and marrying a

Bahamian man,<sup>159</sup> while Grace sees her own fluctuating nationality as an even bigger handicap than her sister's physical limitations. It is important to remark that nationality is seen in this story not as a set of shared values, but rather as a method of protection against injustice—an anxiety suppressor rather than a matter of allegiance. As Grace remarks after acquiring her U.S. passport:

For the first time in my life, I felt truly secure living in America. It was like being in a war zone and finally receiving a weapon of my own, like standing on the firing line and finally getting a bulletproof vest. We had all paid dearly for this piece of paper, this final assurance that I belonged in the club. It had cost my parents' marriage, my mother's spirit, my sister's arm. I felt like an indentured servant who had finally been allowed to join the family. (1996: 185-6)

Danticat acutely exposes the incongruences between nationality and cultural affiliation in second-generation immigrants by using the differing interpretations of a single symbol by her three main characters, and it is through them that the reader becomes a witness to the uniqueness of migratory experiences. Grace and Caroline find their mother's 'old country' superstitions, characterised by her obsession with the supernatural mending powers of her bone soup, tiresome and obsolete while Hermine assumes that her daughters' individuality and dismissal of customs are a side-effect of their non-Haitian upbringing: 'When we were children, whenever we rejected symbols of Haitian culture, Ma used to excuse us with great embarrassment and say, "You know, they are American"' (1996: 145).

---

<sup>159</sup> Echoing the cultural demarcations between different Caribbean nationalities also found in 'Children of the Sea', where skin pigment becomes a mark of belonging: "'Now we will never be mistaken for Cubans,'" one man said. Even though some of the Cubans are black too.' (1996: 7) This, of course, is not merely a superficial observation when one considers the context—the fact that Cubans enjoy a preferential migratory treatment upon arrival to the United States seems to have a poignant resonance with Haitian immigrants inside an uncertain vessel heading North, hoping for the best but conscious of their lower migratory status.

This generational gap and the plurality of experiences it begets is very much a recurring theme in both Danticat's and Díaz's work and it could be argued that the construction of identity keenly observed by both authors in their characters is primarily based on either a rejection or an assimilation of traditions—an assortment of internal dilemmas portrayed in their many complex stages. Oscar Wao's complete alienation from the Dominican stereotype of masculinity eventually transmutes, leading him back to the Dominican Republic to meet his fatal end; likewise, Grace's assimilation through the acquisition of a new nationality leads her to review her family's present configuration and her close affiliation to her Haitian roots, instead of causing her to drift apart from them. Danticat and Díaz are both keen to show that the construction of identity is an incomplete process in flux; a process full of returns and articulations with the past, all related to the surrounding structures (linguistic and cultural) of their present condition. As Nikos Papastergiadis argued in his 1999 study of migratory processes *The Turbulence of Migration*:

there is now an emerging debate in the humanities and social sciences that agency is in a state of mutual transformation with its surrounding structures. Hence, the cultural identity of the immigrant will need to be seen as being partly formed by and in the journey, or on what Paul Virilio calls the 'trajectory', and not as a locked item that preceded the very act of movement. (1999: 4)

The creation of identity is, therefore, a voyage that contains within it several alternate routes, some of which could be construed as being of an almost deterministic nature. The past, though reconfigurable in the present, weighs heavily on any present-day decision. These decisions, in turn, are grounded in the dialectic of acceptance and rejection, and as such, always remain in a restless zone of contested interpretations.

Elsewhere in 'Caroline's Wedding', the mother Hermine, who at the start of the story seems determined to keep her Haitian cultural heritage unspoiled, rejects the superficial moral code of her place of residence and its impact on her offspring: "In Haiti, you own your children and they find it natural," she would say. "They know their duties to the family and they act accordingly. In America, no one owns anything, and certainly not another person." (1996: 186-187) As much as Hermine strives to keep her cultural idiosyncrasies intact, part of her realisation and development throughout the story is seen in her change of heart regarding her daughters. Although this could be read as an example of generational conflict and dislocation, there are many evident ways in which fragments of Haitian tradition are still passed on to new generations, resulting in a fortification of familiar bonds, instead of a total dislocation. Before the wedding, Hermine and Grace attend a special Mass at the local church. Here we witness another of Danticat's recurring themes, that of religious institutions as the articulation of speech and a primary zone of congregation for the diaspora.<sup>160</sup> The priest recites a list of 109 names belonging to Haitian refugees who died before arriving to U.S. soil the prior week and dedicates a special call to an unidentified young woman who died after giving birth at sea (in another call back to the first story of the book): "We have come here this far, from the shackles of the old Africans," read the priest in Creole. "At the mercy of the winds, at the mercy of the sea, to the quarters of the New World, we came. Transients, Nomads, I bid you welcome." (1996: 147)<sup>161</sup> These sermons found

---

<sup>160</sup> Evidenced in her own biography through the figure of her uncle in *Brother, I'm Dying* (see: Chapter II, p. 140), but also through various characterisations of priests and pastors in the majority of her fictional output (see, Chapter I, p. 80).

<sup>161</sup> The enunciation of self-knowledge stemming from communities is opposed to Díaz's admission of Dominican history's silences. This could be construed as an opposition of upbringings: While Danticat's experience is that of silence but also of expression through community, Díaz's is far more reliant on the unspoken and the introspective limitations that come with such lack of confrontation with history.

throughout Danticat's work can be interpreted as the ultimate construction of communal identity in the face of adversity. The church, yet again, becomes a meeting place in which history and theology merge to create opportunities for healing trauma. 'Often after Mass ended, I would feel as though I had taken a very long walk with the dead' (1996: 149), Grace says, showing how the historical elocution of a community's struggles enters the subconscious of second-generation immigrants as a remnant and a reminder, not necessarily as a life-affirming discourse of transcendental importance. This public articulation, of paramount importance to first-generation immigrants, is mirrored by the private conversations between Grace and Caroline, who share dreams about their deceased father and recite his favourite Haitian proverbs and riddles to each other, including his favourite one, which is echoed in the ending of the story by Hermine:

'Why is it that when you lose something, it is always in the last place that you look for it?' she asked finally.  
'Because, of course, once you remember, you always stop looking.' (1996: 188)

One could construe this simple riddle,<sup>162</sup> of vital meaning to the story's construction, as an exercise in loss and memory, one which, true to the nature of the short story as a genre, is caught *in medias res* and holds no definite ending. For Grace, her transition towards becoming a citizen of the United States is symbolised in an inherited anxiety when dealing with official papers—yet Danticat makes it clear that whatever passport she holds, ultimately, her cultural inheritance and world view is

---

<sup>162</sup> Indeed, the title of this collection (*Krik? Krak!*) is a reference to the Haitian culture of the riddle. A comprehensive resource of Haitian riddles and their relationship to peasant culture and, consequently, its African roots, can be found in Jean Price-Mars' collection of ethnographical essays *Ainsi parla l'Oncle* (re-edited in 2009).

resolutely Haitian. Caroline, though more resistant towards adopting her mother's customs, is also shaped by her parents' story, but sees her future farther apart from her family, partially belonging to other branches of the Caribbean diaspora. Meanwhile, Hermine's role as keeper of a well-forged, distinctive cultural identity remains unwavering and in turn, more in tune with Danticat's authorial sense of belonging—that of rescuing stories of the past and preserving the memory of Haiti, as evidenced by the book's epigraph: 'We tell the stories so that the young ones will know what came before them. They ask Krik? we say Krak! Our stories are kept in our hearts' (1996: 1). 'Caroline's Wedding' is permeated with Haitian customs and sayings, which are fleetingly counterpoised with the slight but significant cultural norms of other diasporas—always keeping in the Caribbean theme, never straying too far from the overarching African diaspora. The fact that Caroline's fiancé Eric<sup>163</sup> was born in Nassau seems to be the main impediment to his gaining Hermine's acceptance, but this is also expressed in generational terms (for instance, Hermine cannot fathom a man cooking for his wife). These culture clashes work in both ways, as we can see from the family's next door Cuban neighbour Mrs Ruiz's shocked reaction when asked about her son's death while trying to hijack a plane from Havana to Miami. Danticat seems to imply that even though the differences might be minimal, they are enough to distance one community from another; even when dialoguing with other communities from the local neighbourhoods, Haitian identity can operate as a standalone concept.

The multiplicity of diasporic representations and the subtle differences between neighbouring communities is one of the main subjects of one of Junot Díaz's early short

---

<sup>163</sup> Who is said to have a speech impediment which mirrors Caroline's own handicap, perhaps to indicate that all Caribbean immigrants carry, in one way or another, an impairment of origin.



stories. 'How to Date a Brown Girl, Black Girl, White Girl, or Halfie' was originally printed in *The New Yorker* magazine in 1995,<sup>164</sup> a year before Díaz's debut short story collection *Drown* was published. It is a seven-page satire written in second person that serves as an instruction manual or a dating guide for cross-cultural courting. The story is concise but crammed with a baffling amount of referential symbols, which, taken as a whole, reconstruct several mores of the Dominican diaspora in the East Coast of the United States not only through assimilation and common ground, but also through self-effacement and differentiation. If Danticat presents a unified heritage that staunchly remains untranslatable to outsiders, Díaz dwells on what could only be termed as selective translatability through change—how to hide or exacerbate one's culture depending on the circumstance, a veritable pick and mix of identity craftsmanship.

The story itself begins with a statement of resolute individuality, as Díaz's perennial narrator Yunior asks the reader to 'Wait until your brother, your sisters, and your mother leave the apartment' (1996: 143), followed by instructions on how to clean the house and make sure any traces of poverty (hiding the government cheese from the refrigerator, an item that would betray one's dependency on the welfare system) or race ('Take down any embarrassing photos of your family in the campo, especially, that one with the half-naked kids dragging a goat on a rope. Hide the picture

---

<sup>164</sup> It is interesting to note that there are grammatical disparities between the *The New Yorker* version and the one found in *Drown*, the most obvious being the change in the title from 'How To Date a Brown Girl (Black Girl, White Girl or Halfie)' to 'How To Date a Brown Girl, Black Girl, White Girl or Halfie' without the parentheses. The outlet should also be of special importance if one considers the story is written in second person, directly approaching the reader. Díaz would argue this personal approach is a method to cut any sort of interlocution, yet the demographic of *The New Yorker* is largely white and university educated. Otherness is a core component of Díaz's fiction, but it would be interesting to analyse how textual interpretations of this particular story might vary through different scopes, read: the magazine versus the book.

of yourself with an Afro,' 143) are hidden. These are methods which can be understood by most teenagers of different backgrounds, yet they are expressed in a very idiosyncratic manner; much like all of Díaz's work, it is an accessible approach to realism, with added referential codes that make it even more lifelike for readers of Dominican upbringing or similar diasporas. This rearrangement of cultural codes helps to establish an identity that can only be constructed by initially distancing oneself from immediate family, which in the particular case of a Díaz character is always representative of a hushed traumatic history left behind. Later in the story, attempting to seduce a girl from a different neighbourhood, Yunior suggests:

Supply the story about the loco who'd been storing canisters of tear gas in his basement for years, how one day the canisters cracked and the whole neighbourhood got a dose of the military-strength stuff. Don't tell her that your moms knew right away what it was, that she recognized its smell from the year the United States invaded your island. (1996: 145)

History is omnipresent in any migratory story, but what Díaz skilfully shows is how the suppression of crucial information is part of the bargaining of assimilation. What could superficially be seen as a humorous anecdote to alleviate the cultural differences found in any transaction of the sort holds connotations that go beyond individuality. The unspeakable, a constant presence in other stories of *Drown* and the rest of Díaz's work, is not merely that which cannot be articulated, but also that which can but should not be said, for fear of not fitting in. Unlike Danticat, who portrays identity creation as preservation and response, Díaz is more concerned with identity as strategy and performance—the subtle internal monologues that are part of a personal narrative, not necessarily in tune with the one constructed by the community.<sup>165</sup>

---

<sup>165</sup> This, in turn, recalls Edouard Glissant's reading of Aimé Césaire as 'the first Caribbean writer to consciously examine the notion of the subject as a disembodied

When articulated through language, the process of rejection and assimilation becomes a matter of personal agency, and for Díaz this results in a multiplicity of potential articulations, depending on who happens to be at the receiving end of the conversation. Intersubjective issues of Otherness are always present in Díaz's books, but hardly ever as evidently as in 'How To Date...' in which Yuniór makes a clear demarcation between the target audience of his instructions and the classifiable members of the opposite sex. This interaction can be construed as an acknowledgement of the overlapping of diasporas, the demarcations of race, ethnicity, and gender, and the many ways in which identity can be moulded to fit into different narratives, as Yuniór tells the reader:

You have choices. If the girl's from around the way, take her to El Cibao for dinner. Order everything in your busted-up Spanish. Let her correct you if she's Latina and amaze her if she's black. If she's not from around the way, Wendy's will do. (1996: 145)

There are three levels to Yuniór's framework of cultural segregation: The immediateness of 'local girls', who are well acquainted with the history and customs of the Dominican diaspora; the absolute otherness of 'white girls' who are unaware of the geography of the neighbourhood and for whom the exoticism of an invented 'Latinidad' and a dash of broken Spanish are part of the appeal; and somewhere between both latitudes lies the distant familiarity of the African American diaspora, which instead of presenting a core of restricted symbols, seems to relish the historical significance of social cohesion:

---

self seeking incarnation. (...) For him, the subject was not privileged but simply the site where the collective experience finds articulation.' (1992, 32).

A halfie will tell you that her parents met in the Movement. Back then, she'll say, people thought it was a radical thing to do. It will sound like something her parents made her memorize. Your brother heard that one, too, and said, Sounds like a whole lot of Uncle Tomming to me. Don't repeat this. (1996: 47)

A detached suspiciousness towards learned discourse pervades the stance of Yuniór's brother and his throwaway phrase is unwittingly reminiscent of Stuart Hall's concept of difference, which will be analysed later on this chapter. The distance between diasporas and the mistrust of an articulated past based upon cross-generational inheritances is portrayed by Díaz as a broken dialogue, a distant platitude that holds more importance for the speaker than for the listener:

Put down your hamburger and say, It must have been hard.  
She'll appreciate your interest. She'll tell you more. Black people, she will say, treat me real bad. That's why I don't like them. You'll wonder how she feels about Dominicans. Don't ask. (1996: 147)

More than this being a superficial depiction of feigned interest, or a relativist performance of stereotypical gender roles, the story develops to show how suppression and rejection only result in a precariously constructed identity which is permeated by a distinct lack of self-worth. Part of Díaz's aim is to show the fissures found within denial, and how these, though beneficial for immediate goals, become the source of lengthier dissatisfaction and anxiety. History and inherited trauma will always catch up with the individual, much like Danticat portrays in most of her work. Yet these frustrations are not merely self-made; they are irreversible parts of the immigrant condition, revealing the misinterpretation often found in contact zones, never more explicit than in sexual contact:

Tell her that you love her hair, her skin, her lips, because, in truth, you love them more than you love your own.  
She'll say, I like Spanish guys, and even though you've never been to Spain, say, I like you. You'll sound smooth. (1996: 148)

Ultimately, the creation of a skewed identity is only temporary. The 'you' referred to in the story craves for a longer lasting relationship that remains elusive, for it would presuppose the elongation of a fleeting lie. The girl in question leaves, and Yuniors closes the narrative by alerting the reader to 'Put the government cheese back in its place before your moms kills you' (1996: 149). Escapism is the sole product of a constructed personality—the government cheese, whether hidden or in plain sight, remains there. It represents a more ironic and less poetic symbol than the Haitian proverbs bequeathed to Caroline and Grace, but one which is still at the core of any individual's relationship with a diaspora or a community—for second-generation immigrants, the idea of diaspora and its cultural inheritance is more often than not found within themselves, and extraterritorial literature is one of the methods that can be used to articulate its meaning in public.

**The Politics of Inclusion:  
Rejection and Acceptance in Junot Díaz's 'Drown'**

The construction of identity and its resulting critique through fictional characters is a main feature of Díaz and Danticat's work, but it is nonetheless restricted to being a textual tool. Outside of the text, the divisions between authorship and characterisation become points of contention made all the more complicated by both authors' common reliance on depicting families of very similar backgrounds and experiences to theirs. If the experience of migration is shown to be unique and fluid, it is always represented through the scope of personal experience, creating a mirrored reflection between what is real, and what is based in reality. A pertinent example is presented in Danticat's biography *Brother, I'm Dying*, which was marketed as a non-fiction memoir of her

family's struggles in Haiti and the United States, though it could very well be read as a crafted work of partial fabrication departing from reality. In this case, the lack of a neutral perspective is replaced by an insider's view, one that is mostly formed through a recollection of thoughts and memories from Danticat's childhood, itself marked by significant silences and withheld information. One could argue that what constitutes the difference between construction and reconstruction is the existence of material, historical facts, more often than not related to the grander scheme of contemporary politics in Haiti, yet as I have attempted to show in previous chapters, these facts are often tarnished with unreliable narratives and manipulated information—both in the private and public spheres.

Regarding the public, these expositions of factual inaccuracy result in the need to embody the consequences of political fallibility through characterisation and methods of identity creation. We know, for instance, that both François Duvalier and Rafael Trujillo knowingly perverted their own narratives and that of their countries to perpetuate their established order,<sup>166</sup> while Danticat and Díaz, instead of assuming those narratives as fact, portray the direct results of those deviated realities through their characters' struggles. Yet, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao's* Belicia Cabral, *The Farming of Bones's* Amabelle Desir, and even *Brother I'm Dying's* 'Edwidge Danticat' are but vessels through which their authors, with significant aid from their own recollections, depict the perils of constructed realities within the framework of fiction—itsself, evidently, a fabricated structure.

---

<sup>166</sup> See: Chapter I, p. 82.

True to their extraterritorial approach, these characterisations are seldom static. Junot Díaz's formation of his recurring character Yunior de las Casas—an alter-ego of sorts, but also very much a conscious creation—remains in constant flux and progressively reveals new features throughout the three books in which he appears. Yunior is an approachable narrator whose believability is rooted in familiarity, not only between himself and the myriad depictions of family members and friendships, but also between the authorial voice and the reader's reception. It is pertinent to note that this is achieved firstly through narrative technique. Many stories are written with the character directly addressing the reader,<sup>167</sup> but also through Díaz's use of existing settings (be they in the Dominican Republic or in New Jersey) which are depicted to root Yunior's life within the constraints of geography, crafting a sense of social reality that could be construed as heavily dependent on biographical details.

'Drown' (the short story found in the collection of the same title) is a prime example of both Díaz's familiarity with surroundings and the limitations of identity through interpersonal relationships. In the story, Yunior recalls his childhood friendship with a neighbour called Beto. In the first paragraphs the reader learns (though only through the use of the Dominican slang word *pato*) of Beto's homosexuality and Yunior's current estrangement from him. However, the distance between the two characters is abridged by memories of their conjoined upbringing, showing an education limited by the geographical and social borders experienced by

---

<sup>167</sup> Often exercised through the second person, as is the case of 'How To Date A Browngirl...' or 'The Cheater's Guide to Love'. Díaz himself, however, has repeatedly expressed his mistrust of this technique and its conscious artificiality: 'To be honest, when it comes down to it, I prefer the first person. The first person is far easier for me. It's far more natural. It's far more human. It's less, I would say, fashioned.' (Díaz in Fassler, 2012).

members of the Dominican diaspora in New Jersey. From Sayreville Library to Prospect Park, the depictions of neighbourhood life by Díaz are strikingly material and constantly render the links between the communal and the personal with a pervading sense of stasis, counter imposed with the fluidity of the characters and their minor acts of disobedience:

Families arranged on their porches, the glow from their TVs washing blue against the brick. From my family apartment you could smell the pear trees that had been planted years ago, four to a court, probably to save us all from asphyxiation. Nothing moved fast, even the daylight was slow to fade, but as soon as night settled Beto and I headed down the community center and sprang the fence into the pool. We were never alone, every kid with legs was there. [...] At around midnight abuelas, with their night hair swirled around spiky rollers, shouted at us from their apartment windows. ¡Sinvergüenzas! Go home! (1996: 92)

It is eventually revealed that Yuniór's sense of identity, specifically his sexual identity, is constructed not through personal choices, but rather by the restrictions placed upon him by his family structure and the neighbourhood's authority figures. The reader finds him living with his mother, actively trying to protect her emotional vulnerability by hanging up calls from his estranged father (who lives in Florida with a different family), while hiding from her his past relationship with Beto—itsself marked by two sexual encounters, significantly left unresolved.<sup>168</sup> During his teenage years, Yuniór is introspective and gentle, while Beto's brash nature leads him to commit

---

<sup>168</sup> Yuniór moves on without an internal monologue or an explicit thought process related to the preconditioning gender performances expected by a diaspora, which, admittedly, would make the story less nuanced, but this repression of sexuality within diasporic identities recalls Gloria Anzaldúa's words in *Borderlands/La Frontera*—a text which is quite familiar to Díaz himself (see: Segura, G, 2017): 'We're afraid of being abandoned by the mother, the culture, *La Raza*, for being unacceptable, faulty, damaged. Most of us unconsciously believe that if we reveal this unacceptable aspect of the self our mother/culture/race will totally reject us. To avoid rejection, some of us conform to the values of the culture; push the unacceptable parts into the shadows. Which leaves only one fear—that we will be found out and that the Shadow-Beast will break out of its cage' (1987: 20).



transgressive acts, from petty burglary to property trespassing. Beto's unapologetic boldness is ultimately expressed in his dislocation from the neighbourhood after taking the decision to leave the limits of New Jersey by enrolling in university, not without leaving a parting message to Yuniór in the final paragraphs of the story:

You can't be anywhere forever, was what Beto used to say, what he said to me the day I went to see him off. He handed me a gift, a book, and after he was gone I threw it away, didn't even bother to open it and read what he'd written. (1996: 107)

'Drown' ends with Yuniór stuck within the geographical and emotional boundaries of home, and the self-contained story leaves an imprint of unresolved possibilities and curtailed identities. In her essay 'Passing and the State in Junot Díaz's "Drown"', Dorothy Stringer adapts Margot Canaday's concept of 'passing'—a method of identity camouflage as means of fitting into an established order—to depict the story's systems of exclusion, found explicitly in the authoritarian white figures of school teachers, mall security guards and Army recruiters. She argues that the limits that contour the relationships and personalities of Díaz's characters are shaped by Yuniór's marginal condition and, ultimately, the role of a larger oppressive state in which issues of belonging and citizenship always play an important role. Crucially, Stringer identifies Díaz's use of silences (depicted in Yuniór's refusal to engage with authorities and his self-conscious repression of knowledge and sexuality) as the lack of elocution of minorities in the political sphere and, on a more authorial level, a formal rejection from Díaz himself to comply with the restrictions and tools associated with literary criticism:

Díaz's writerly aggression against dearly-held critical values of mastery, coherence, and formal unity reminds us that gaps—words unsaid, censored, and thrown away—are not only the material reality of every archive, including literary canons and government documents alike, but also the enforced condition of racial and sexual minority participation in official discourse. (2013: 124)

One of the leitmotifs and driving forces of Díaz's work is indeed that of the incompleteness of reality, exercised by exemplifying the importance of silence in fictional and political narrative, the rejection of a whole and the elusiveness of absolute coherence, which results in marginal discourse as the antithesis of a totality and of totalitarianism itself. But we should not forget we are dealing with a yet-to-be finalised body of work, and as such, all contemporary analysis must be aware of its inherent incompleteness. As a matter of fact, the characterisation of Yunior is grander than the scheme of 'Drown' the story or even *Drown* the collection—in future appearances<sup>169</sup> he will go to university and become an academic himself, showing that the interactions found within previous stories are of crucial importance to the character's development<sup>170</sup>—thereby creating new meanings and subtleties in Díaz's corpus and his own philosophy in flux, which stands close to but wary of social realism. Speaking in a 2012 interview, Díaz admitted the conscious role realism plays in his work and its relationship to the reader:

[...] the approach is never to distance. The move is never to distance. It's that Philip Roth move. If you distance yourself from the reader, it ends up backfiring. But to try to play with people's expectations—not play in a manipulative way, though you are manipulating, but to productively engage in someone's expectations about this as biography. The only reasons people are going to think this is biography is: A) If they read it; and, B) If they're moved by it. And some people, sure, they'll dismiss it, saying, "This motherfucker can't write. This is just regurgitated memoir." (Díaz in Scarano, 2012)

---

<sup>169</sup> We learn this from his autobiographical details on *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* and the cross-temporal stories in *This is How You Lose Her*.

<sup>170</sup> In a tacit sense, Beto's refusal to stay in the neighbourhood and his search for knowledge and a different lifestyle becomes an inspiration for Yunior's future career choices. Whether they ever reconnected is unknown; unless it is done inside a short story cycle such as in the case of *This Is How You Lose Her* with the recurrence of Yunior's mother and his brother Rafa, Díaz never recalls other characters in Yunior's life.

Through the recognition of gaps and silences, the type of realism employed by Díaz and Danticat in their narratives is based upon the distrust and questioning of the incompleteness of material reality itself. Ultimately, there is no reason why *Drown* should be read as a truthful representation of *all* Dominican families in the United States, much like *Krik? Krak!* cannot encompass all perspectives from the Haitian immigrant experience.<sup>171</sup> Although Díaz often uses generalisations to refer to the Dominican diaspora, and his characters seem to draw their identity from their relationship with their immediate surroundings (be it families, significant others, or the neighbourhood), he does not aim and would never be able to encompass the totality of his background, a fact which many readers and critics choose to overlook for the sake of interpretation. One of the recurring demands and frustrations of being a ‘marginal writer’ is the incessant and reductionist view that they should become ‘the voice’ of their respective diasporas. As this chapter has attempted to show, the concept of diaspora itself is filled with complications, affiliations and de-affiliations, and, as such, any statement made by a specific author should be seen as an expression of individuality within difference, instead of constituting an official enunciation on behalf of others. Yet the modern codes used by mainstream media, publishing houses and academic circles lean towards simplification as a timesaving tool. Thus, Junot Díaz and Edwidge Danticat become ‘Dominican-American writer Junot Díaz’ and ‘Haitian-American author Edwidge Danticat’—a reductionist description that is rife with essentialism and excludes many of their idiosyncrasies and binds them to that most restrictive of constructed qualities: nationality.

---

<sup>171</sup> The work of Dany Laferrière, for one, shows how migratory experiences can also result in the conscious disassociation instead of preservation of traditional concepts of nationality.

Another relevant problematic is that which traces Díaz and Danticat's influences and roots them in the scope of English-language literature written in the United States, what literary critics call 'tradition'.<sup>172</sup> Both authors, in terms of formal literary technique, have wide-ranging influences, and these transcend restrictions placed by language or geographic location. Danticat, in articles and interviews, has expressed profound admiration for the work of Gabriel García Márquez<sup>173</sup>—yet far from being associated with the 'Latin American canon', her works have scarcely been translated into Spanish. Matters are further complicated by her early French education in Haiti, years in which she read and assimilated the work of francophone writers, most notably Albert Camus, himself a writer in flux between cultures. Therefore, it would also be reductive to imply that, due to their physical upbringing in the East Coast of the United States, both Díaz and Danticat had typical 'American educations'. A discussion could be derived from the fact that they attended classes in academic programmes at the universities of Rutgers and Cornell (in Díaz's case) and Barnard and Brown (in Danticat's)—however, the material they read, which later influenced their own work, was not solely restricted to the syllabuses from these lessons.<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, their multi-linguistic upbringing does not belong to a singular totemic tradition, an issue

---

<sup>172</sup> In the sense of tradition as an antiquated concept in literary studies still taught in schools and universities around the world which still sees T.S. Eliot's essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', written almost a century ago in 1921, as its Rosetta stone.

<sup>173</sup> Danticat, 2014. 'Gabriel García Márquez: An Appreciation'. *The New Yorker* (Online) [http:// www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/gabriel-garca-mrquez-an-appreciation](http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/gabriel-garca-mrquez-an-appreciation) [last accessed: 1/2/2017].

<sup>174</sup> There are plenty of critiques on the over-reliance of universities and Masters of Fine Arts programmes to produce literary authors in the United States (see: Mark McGurl's *The Program Era*, 2011). Referring to this debate, Díaz's essay 'MFA vs POC' centres its argument on the inherent whiteness of such programmes, from tutors to authors found on syllabuses, and argues of his own experience: 'Simply put: I was a person of color in a workshop whose theory of reality did not include my most fundamental experiences as a person of color—that did not in other words include *me*' (Díaz, 2014).

which was contested by the reception immediately garnered by their debut short story collections.

Early reviews of *Drown* made a point of recognising Díaz as ‘...an unflinching observer, an insider, of tough teen-age Latino immigrants in New Jersey’ (Stewart, 1996), failing to read diaspora as anything but a superficial tag and choosing to brand the author as either a frontline reporter covering the landscape of ‘Latino ghettos’ or the latest model of the Great American Writer. The main problem with both points of view—one self-serving and the other condescending—is that they draw a clear barrier between the white educated establishment and the outsider author. And while this often expresses a seemingly gracious offer of assimilation, it is nonetheless a short-sighted approach to analysis, especially when taking into consideration the circumstances that led Díaz to write in English in the first place, namely: the imperial attitude of the United States towards Hispaniola throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Writing for the *New York Times Book Review*, journalist and novelist David Gates chose to read *Drown* and its opening epigraph thus:

The poem Mr. Diaz uses for his epigraph concludes, ‘I / don't belong to English / though I belong nowhere else.’ That's as good a history of American literature as you're apt to find in 10 words, and if Junot Diaz thinks he doesn't quite belong in this tradition, that suggests he's smack-dab in the middle. (Gates, 1996)

Referencing an array of authors born in the United States (from Raymond Carver to Zora Neale Hurston), Gates’ text attempts to minimise the anxiety of not belonging found in Díaz’s work by embracing the author into the contentious idea of tradition and national canons. The multiverse of outsider voices in literature written in the United States has long been a matter of pride for those who devote their work to

analysing it, but this approach fails to notice the inherent universality of marginal (extraterritorial) literature. It is this constant struggle between acceptance and rejection that powers such literature, and fluidity is part of its idiosyncrasy, which rejects any advances towards canonisation. However, the recognition of what is inherently 'American' versus what is plainly extraterritorial will remain at the discretion of whoever chooses to read it in such a way—such is the subjective nature of fabricated national traits. The idea of the acceptance of Díaz into the nationalised canon of the United States has progressively augmented as his books reached a wider audience,<sup>175</sup> climaxing in a presidential invitation to the White House in early 2017 extended to him and four other authors<sup>176</sup> by then-president Barack Obama. In an interview that followed with *The New York Times'* chief book reviewer Michiko Kakutani, Obama unwittingly expanded on the position presented by Gates' twenty-year-old review by briefly analysing Díaz's work and its relationship to other authors from the United States:

I think Díaz's books do speak to a very particular contemporary immigration experience. But also this combination of — that I think is universal — longing for this better place, but also feeling displaced and looking backwards at the same time. I think in that sense, their novels are directly connected to a lot of American literature.

---

<sup>175</sup> Marisel Moreno's essay 'Debunking Myths. Destabilizing Identities: a Reading of Junot Díaz's "How to Date etc."' uses texts by Silvio Torres-Saillant to argue that Díaz's 'shift to the center' had been happening right after the publication of *Drown* (2007: 10), while Saillant himself has years later expanded upon Díaz's status as an 'American writer' in his essay 'Artistry, Ancestry, and Americanness in the Works of Junot Díaz', where he concludes: 'On the whole, with Junot Díaz we have a literary artist whose texts we cannot read strictly through the self-evident civil rights paradigms that abound in the criticism of much ethnic American literature. His writing will not let us find the politics unless we first commit to fumbling through the complexities of the art.' (in Hanna, et al, 2016: 141-42).

<sup>176</sup> Dave Eggers, Colson Whitehead, Zadie Smith and Barbara Kingsolver. (Kakutani, M. 2017). Transcript: President Obama on What Books Mean to Him, *New York Times*.

Some of the great books by Jewish authors like Philip Roth or Saul Bellow, they are steeped with this sense of being an outsider, longing to get in, not sure what you're giving up — what you're willing to give up and what you're not willing to give up. So that particular aspect of American fiction I think is still of great relevance today. (Obama in Kakutani, 2017)

These comments could have symbolically signalled the starting point for the institutionalisation of immigrant literature in the United States,<sup>177</sup> yet far from Gates' absolutist integration, Obama's own vision of American Exceptionalism in literature is more nuanced and contoured by the measured language of diplomacy, recognising the links of acceptance and rejection found in the work of authors with diasporic backgrounds as an aspect of books written in the United States, whilst tacitly conceding that these traits are not the unique property of a single nation. Curiously, he chooses to equate the work of Díaz to that of Roth and Bellow, two prominent examples of another diaspora, the Jewish diaspora.<sup>178</sup> However, the signs of classification and canon architecture are still present in the terms 'American literature' and 'American fiction', which remain a national, rather than a continental, pursuit. This discrepancy of terms stands opposed to extraterritorialism and carries with it a subtle silencing of the uneven political and historical relationships of the hemisphere—what Walter Mignolo referred to as 'border gnosis', knowledge that is kept within the limitations and the perspective of an empire, serving primarily a dominating purpose and obscuring less privileged points of view.<sup>179</sup>

---

<sup>177</sup> An idea made all the more complicated by the weeks that followed Obama's end of his presidential mandate, substituting his discourse of affected tolerance with the Trump administration's aggressively insular narrative, showing that the mutability of identity is not solely restricted to individuals—it too affects discourse in countries and the state.

<sup>178</sup> Parallels which have also been drawn by Ben Railton in comparison to authors of US American literature in his essay 'Novelist-Narrators of the American Dream: The (Meta-) Realistic Chronicles of Cather, Fitzgerald, Roth, and Díaz,' (2011).

<sup>179</sup> See: Chapter II, p. 130.

The dissociation of political and economical factors from the work of Díaz and Danticat becomes impossible from the point of conception of the books themselves. Even when separated from the content found within, their books are unquestionably the material product of immigrant labour—and as such, any notion of adoption by an established order is enacted within the parameters of colonial thought. This is an even more evident issue when taking into consideration the particular history between the countries where Díaz and Danticat were born and their place of residence. Sociologist Orlando Patterson termed the political-economic relations of the Caribbean and the United States as ‘peripheral dualism’,<sup>180</sup> an association that, in turn, overrides other historical connections of the area (such as the evident separation between the Dominican Republic and other Hispanophone countries of Latin America) and creates a perilous liaison to a United States ‘centre’. To Haiti and the Dominican Republic this represents, in a socio-economic sense, the dependence on a larger market, and in a cultural sense, the prelude to cultural appropriation. However, dismissing the work of Díaz and Danticat as merely a symptom of foreign policy and modern colonialism akin to the trade of baseball players would represent a superficial approach to an elaborate product—the work itself, that is, the stories found within, are stories which would not exist without this exchange: they are created in-between ‘peripheral dualism’, yet remain conscious of their extraterritorial properties.

---

<sup>180</sup> I am borrowing this interpretation from James Clifford in his essay ‘Travelling Cultures’, who dances around the issue of extraterritoriality without directly referencing it, using Patterson’s theory to talk about Haitian migration and expanding upon the notion that ‘there are different cultures that are somewhere(s), not all over the map’ (p. 45) and the pertinent question of ‘identity as a politics rather than an inheritance’ (p. 46).



The unequal political, and indeed cultural, relationship between the United States and Hispaniola is never hidden by either Díaz or Danticat. In fact, the charted military invasions of both sides of the island serve either as a departure point or as an explicit element to many of their stories, such as the bookends to the life of Edwidge Danticat's uncle Joseph in *Brother I'm Dying*<sup>181</sup> or several of the footnotes found in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. If, indeed, both authors were part of the United States literary canon, this would presuppose that the invasions of Haiti and the Dominican Republic would also be part of the country's official history—a recognition that would imply several *mea culpas* from an increasingly parochial and isolationist status quo. But as Walter Mignolo observed: 'To embrace Americanness is to dwell in the erasures of coloniality' (2005: 48). This represents a coloniality constantly critiqued by both Díaz and Danticat under the auspices of 'Americanness' yet done so not by embracing it, but rather by shedding light on the uneven interstices of its potential structure.

In his essay 'Conjectures on "Americanness" and Junot Díaz's "Fukú Americanus"' in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, José David Saldívar analyses Díaz's novel, specifically the concept of *fukú americanus*<sup>182</sup> as a symbol of the cross-cultural implications brought about by the inequalities delineated by borders. Saldívar references Wallerstein's theoretical postulations in the concept of World Systems<sup>183</sup> and equates them to the narrator Yunior's use of the *fukú americanus* as a method to

---

<sup>181</sup> As Danticat reflects in the book: 'Did he think it ironic that he would soon be the dead prisoner of the same government that had been occupying his country when he was born? In essence he was entering and exiting the world under the same flag. Never really sovereign, as his father had dreamed, never really free.' (2007: 210).

<sup>182</sup> This is a phrase which seems all-pervasive in academic studies of *Oscar Wao* and in the novel itself—which serves almost as a science fiction leitmotif to describe the 'curses' which follow Oscar's family and the Dominican Republic as a whole.

<sup>183</sup> See: Chapter I, p. 89.

unveil the matrix of power patterns between the United States and the rest of the world. Saldívar argues:

Díaz's novel tells stories about the multiple sites of Americanness's ruptured history and the processes of possible retrieval, recovery, and transculturation of that very ruptured history. [...] Transmodernity as a form of Yunió's *fukú americanus* signifies the global networks within which modernity became possible. If the Eurocentric imaginary of modernity has forgotten colonialism and imperialism, the task of Díaz's *fukú americanus* as analogous to the colonial divergence is to reinscribe this erased history in the novel's spatiotemporal simultaneity. (2011: 132-134)

The questions raised by Saldívar are not dissimilar to those proposed by Wallerstein elsewhere. The World Systems method thus becomes an historiographical instrument employed by Díaz to show the interconnectedness between Dominican and United States history and the lack of balance found within. Díaz does so, however, by taking advantage of the tools provided to him by his East Coast upbringing—from the local libraries of his youth to his higher education and his current position as lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. But we must not forget that the possibility of encountering a literary Dominican voice with enough range to reach the President of the United States would have been even more improbable had it come from the island or been translated into English from Spanish. In this sense Díaz's foreignness is itself incomplete, facilitating his United States audience's assimilation of neighbouring historical events not taught to them in school and, ultimately, expanding their own border gnosis.

Díaz and Danticat's status as 'familiar outsiders' informs their literary output but it also serves as a passport for the articulation of the type of silenced discourse that transcends fiction: what could be called the politics of the margins. Both authors are

conscious that their individual biographies, and the stories these apprise, are also part of a collective story, and furthermore, they use their privileged status as citizens of the United States to amplify communal political messages related to their countries of birth, recalling Deleuze and Guattari's postulation<sup>184</sup> that 'the three characteristics of minor literature are the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation.' (1989: 22). In a similar vein, Perry Anderson identified three types of agency in any elocution of political action:

...the pursuit of purely private goals; public projects that may be either individual or collective, and that by virtue of becoming public act in history, but without transforming social relations as such; and finally those 'collective projects which have sought to render their initiators authors of their collective mode of existence as a whole, in a conscious programme aimed at creating or remodelling whole social structures. (Anderson in Lüticken 24)

An argument could be made that public projects such as Danticat and Díaz's books are meant to transform social relations, and find their strength and value in doing so, but it is imperative to note that this is also accompanied by several political statements made by both authors (sometimes even in jointly signed articles and petitions), who have often used their public personas and well-known names to adhere to causes which reinforce several of the values found within their fiction.<sup>185</sup> Such a case happened in 2013 with the approval of Sentencia TC 0168-13 by the Dominican Congress, the edict was criticised in an open letter to *The New York Times* by Danticat and Díaz (alongside fellow authors Julia Alvarez and Mark Kurlansky), who castigated the law as 'institutionalized racism' (2013)—one of the many instances in which both

---

<sup>184</sup> See: Chapter II, p. 163.

<sup>185</sup> A case could be made that their celebrity status in literary circles has become a vital resource for the nurturing of their public personas and the amplifying of their political voices. See: introduction, p. 42.

authors have sternly criticised the Dominican state, in the case of Díaz resulting in the stripping of an order of merit award and the declaration of him as *persona non grata* by the Dominican establishment.<sup>186</sup>

The mutual disavowal expressed by both authors of the status quo of their native countries is axiomatic of their extraterritorial condition, yet portions of the left-wing media in the United States see them as emissaries or conduits to finding out ‘the real story’ of what is happening in Hispaniola. In an essay found within her non-fiction collection *Create Dangerously*, Edwidge Danticat reflects on the pressures of representative action which came after the 2010 earthquake that hit Haiti:

Even before the first aftershock, people were calling me asking, 'Edwidge, what are you going to do? When are you going back? Could you come on television or on the radio and tell us how you feel? Could you write us fifteen hundred words or less? (2010: 19)

The public expectation placed upon Danticat and Díaz to play the roles of voices of their respective diasporas in the United States has facilitated the spread of political messages to their English-speaking audiences, but it has also instilled in them a certain feeling of insufficiency shaped by their shared scrutiny of established intellectualism. Their recognition of the incompleteness of reality is a central part of their literary credo, but it has a more tacit presence in their political articulations, which always tussle with the demand of presenting a realistic vision of Hispaniola that can never truly be comprehensive or actualised. Indeed, the mores of being an author in the 21<sup>st</sup>

---

<sup>186</sup> The official declaration stated: ‘We emphatically declare that the Dominican Republic has acted with transparency before the world in the implementation of these immigration measures,’ the consul general of the Dominican Republic, Eduardo Selman, said Thursday in a statement released to the media. “There have been no cases of violation of human rights nor of statelessness among the Haitians or any other foreigners, contrary to what is said by the writer Junot Díaz, who has demonstrated himself to be anti-Dominican.’ (McDonald, 2015).

century concede many opportunities for this public political elocution and involve a vast array of tours, interviews and presentations that often eclipse the written work itself—this is quite evident in the case of Díaz, who has published three books in the last twenty-two years, yet has certainly exceeded the amount of words that constitute his written output in interviews, conferences and speeches alone. Far from producing their work in solitary confinement, contemporary authors have to deal with external expectations and activities peripheral to their craft, whilst pandering to the exigencies of the market. This adjudicates their written fiction as the core of the work, but hardly constitutes the complete picture.

The recognition of incompleteness is therefore not merely found in the texts themselves, but also in the authors' knowledge that the texts are never comprehensive, always subject to addenda. In that sense, the creation of identity found in Danticat's and Diaz's novels and short stories could be construed to be an enactment of what could happen if they had full control over their own identities as authors—a luxury that eludes most individuals who develop their art in the public eye. This shows the clear parameters of identity and the limitations in which this identity is constructed within and with fiction; these expressions of identity can also be articulated as political action when performed in a self-reflexive manner and as a method of recognising the limitations of an author's scope, a scope that could be expanded by borrowing concepts from anthropology and social studies.

### **Self Reflexivity: Awareness and Politics in Edwidge Danticat's 'New York Day Women'**

In her 2015 book *Market Aesthetics: The Purchase of the Past in Caribbean Diasporic Fiction*, Elena Machado Sáez proceeds from the scope of gender studies to analyse the intricacies of Caribbean diasporic history-driven fiction in external contexts. She examines the work of several writers, including Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* and Díaz's *Oscar Wao*, to elucidate the contradictions found within the didactic, often pedagogical approach of diasporic authors towards their audience and the resulting 'market intimacy' established between writer and reader. Going beyond the casual consumer, Machado Sáez is also severely critical of the academic response to diasporic writing, which according to her, overestimates the decolonising possibilities of such discourse without sufficiently paying attention to the paradoxes of market aesthetics. When referring to Danticat and Díaz, she observes several instances of self-reflexivity in which the authors, through their characters, seem to criticise the reliability of their own point of view,<sup>187</sup> and by default, the limitations of their diasporic activism. She argues that Díaz and Danticat's work, specifically their novels, can be read as a challenge to idealistic academic readings of diaspora, 'critiquing these as narrow definitions of belonging' (2015: 158) by detecting the competing identities and plural definitions of

---

<sup>187</sup> A very interesting point is made regarding the evolution of Yunior's character shifting from a marginal presence to a more authorial, and indeed, authoritarian involvement as the omniscient narrator in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* after the revelation of his name in the narrative: 'Once the appearance of objectivity is shattered by this revelation of identity, Yunior's storytelling also shifts. As the nameless narrator, Yunior plays the part of a confident and trusted informant, but he becomes plagued with doubts about his ability to tell the story [...] this self-consciousness turns defensive as Yunior confesses his concerns about the reader's demands for information and realism, as well as his ability to fulfill those expectations.' (Machado Sáez, 2015: 163).

diaspora found in their characters. Noting the contradictions between product and consumption, she argues:

Caribbean diasporic writing, within the context of Global North ethnic writing, struggles with the expectations placed upon it by various consumers, from within and beyond their communities. The balance is not simply one of conformity versus resistance, but of desiring recognition from mainstream and minority communities that come with different definitions of authenticity for ethnic writers. The artistic project of speaking with authority to those communities, of depicting the Caribbean diaspora in an ethical manner to insiders and outsiders, is encoded in the market aesthetics of writers such as Díaz and Danticat. (2015: 193-194)

Machado Sáez remarks that the economic pressures for both authors have been alleviated by the awarding of the MacArthur Genius fellowship<sup>188</sup> to Danticat in 2009 and Díaz in 2012, observing that this has allowed Danticat to take on other enterprises, such as editorial roles for several compilations and side-projects<sup>189</sup> and Díaz to focus on the conception of a science fiction novel, the as-now seemingly abandoned *Mostro*. Though not wholly backed by primary market research in the case of Díaz and Danticat, she shows that the expectations placed by consumers anticipating a certain type of literature that prizes multiculturalism as a commodity is part of a 'market aesthetics' in which authenticity and believability are scrutinised by one sector of the readership and lauded by another. The divergent understandings of and reactions to Díaz and Danticat's books from readers are not presented through clear illustrations by Machado Sáez, and they escape the scope of this chapter, but is nonetheless an interesting point

---

<sup>188</sup> A five-year 'no strings attached' grant of more than half a million dollars, designed to give its recipients (from artists to scientists) 'economic freedom' over their creative work.

<sup>189</sup> *Haiti Noir* and *Best American Essays* in 2011 are two salient examples of anthologies edited by Danticat after gaining the Fellowship.

of contention in the believability of created identities,<sup>190</sup> especially when taking into account the role Realism plays in the work of both authors. Authenticity might be a desired effect in the conception of their fiction, but the result is ultimately subjective, and therefore demands the recollection of more than one interpretation to decide whether or not it encompasses a 'true' representation of the Dominican or Haitian diaspora. However, there is little doubt that the ethics of (self) depiction are imperative to Díaz and Danticat in the production of their work.

Díaz and Danticat have often spoken about the pressures and expectations placed upon them as 'diasporic writers' by the public sphere. In *Create Dangerously*, Danticat remarks: 'When you belong to a minority group, even when you write fiction, people think it's sociology or anthropology' (2010: 49). This is an argument articulated to repel any multi-disciplinary assessment of the non-artistic aspects of her fiction, and as such, it is a valid critique of the scrutiny of any reader or academic who would choose to focus on content over style. Yet, far from the ethnification or the close-minded reading of her work as representative of an entire diaspora, there are several ways in which Danticat's fictional characters exercise certain aspects of anthropological methods, and the examples of this approach found in her work constitute, contrary to any reductionist point of view, part of its richness.

One such instance occurs in a short story found in her debut collection *Krik? Krak!*. Acting almost as a prelude to the more complex relationships found in the story

---

<sup>190</sup> There is surely enough material for an entire dissertation on the plurality of receptions of diasporic writing to be studied, but a brief discussion of the possibilities of different linguistic readings of Díaz's and Danticat's work can be found in Chapter II, p. 129.



that follows ('Caroline's Wedding'), 'New York Day Women' is a brief cross-generational story narrated in present tense from the perspective of Suzette, a second-generation Haitian immigrant who works in Manhattan but lives in Brooklyn with her mother. The division between boroughs is not only that of work versus home, but also seen as a dislocation between the new and the old world, the customs of a wholly Americanised lifestyle as opposed to the slower-paced, Haitian-influenced residential area. The main tension in the storyline is drawn from the moment where, on her lunch break, Suzette sees her mother from afar walking through Manhattan—thus the narrative splits into two registers: expectations colliding with reality.

The initial worry of finding her mother in a surprising location turns into an anthropological curiosity to see how she interacts with this new environment. Suzette sees her mother waiting to cross a busy road and begins to remember her mother's quotes from past experiences, including previous comparisons she had made between New York and Haiti: 'In Haiti when you get hit by a car, the owner of the car gets out and kicks you for getting blood on his bumper' (1996: 144). The discourse of memory becomes a method of protection in the shape of a saying. This division between the past left behind and the safer present is reduced by Danticat to a very simple phrase, but one that, true to her style, denotes subtle sophistication in its many tacit readings: the fact that Suzette remembers her mother's recollections already establishes a broken nexus between her and Haiti, the concept of which exists as a reminder of the existence of a different, more aggressive, life she has been spared from. The reader progressively learns, through Suzette's investigation, that the image projected by her mother is clearly a fabricated identity, almost the antithesis of the character she pretended to be

for her daughter. She sees her browsing through a clothes rack and remembers her past attitude towards buying and selling dresses:

Why should we give to Goodwill when there are so many people back home who need clothes? We save our clothes for the relatives in Haiti.

Twenty years we have been saving all kinds of things for the relatives in Haiti. I need the place in the garage for an exercise bike. (1996: 131)

The uses of material goods seem to be a bone of contention between generations, one thinking of a resourceful past and the other of a more materialistic future. This sense of the frugality of Haitian customs is scattered throughout Danticat's work, but here she entertains the idea that perhaps these attitudes are more discourse than action. Suzette's mother often refused to eat anywhere other than in her own home, but here she is in the present buying cans of soft drinks and even a frankfurter, against her previous melodramatic statements against sodium intake: 'I cannot just swallow salt. Salt is heavier than a hundred bags of shame' (1996: 149). Although the method of observation is distant, the memories these events awaken are tender and intimate and help to establish a strong nexus between characters even when their interactions are only fixed through memories.

There is a sense of actualisation that happens throughout the story whereby Suzette's fears of her mother not fitting into her new life in Manhattan are resoundingly allayed by every movement she observes. Reaching a park, Suzette realises the reason for her mother's trip to the city, as she sees her being given temporary custody of a child by a woman in fitness gear. Suzette observes the close relationship between her mother and the child, as she gives him the can of soft drink she bought earlier in the story. An hour later, always from a distance, Suzette sees the return of the woman in

fitness gear, who comes back to pick up her child. This begets the ultimate realisation of sacrifice: that her mother never went to her own parent-teacher meetings for fear of embarrassing her: 'You're so good anyway. What are they going to tell me? I don't want to make you ashamed of this day woman. Shame is heavier than a hundred bags of salt' (1996: 155). It becomes clear that a participatory method of identity construction, one based upon questions and not silences, would not result in the objective realities of distanced scrutiny. Ultimately, Suzette recognises her mother as a stand-alone individual, far from the restrictions of home and the formalities of their relationship. It is a non-participant observation process without the subject's awareness. But far from being critical of this method, the narrator gains insight into a new dimension of her mother's image, appreciating the unexpected revelations that escape her preconceptions of her mother's character:

I follow my mother, mesmerized by the many possibilities of her journey. Even in a flowered dress, she is lost in a sea of pinstripes and gray suits, high heels and elegant short skirts, Reebok sneakers, dashing from building to building. (1996: 129)

Here we find the difference between sociology and fiction—the transposition of a familiar character with a background of anonymity gives way to the poetics of perspective and the recognition of both identity and perception as incomplete and lacking total veracity. It could be argued that, far from being separate from sociology or anthropology, the character of Suzette and the admission of disparaging realities is close to what Pierre Bourdieu termed 'participant objectivation', as he argued in the speech of the same name:

Participant objectivation, arguably the highest form of the sociological art, is realizable only to the extent that it is predicated on as complete as possible an objectivation of the interest to objectivize inscribed in the act of participating, as

well as on a bracketing of this interest and of the representations it sustains. (1992: 260)

Opposing the point of view publicly postulated by Danticat when defending her condition as an immigrant writer against essentialism, Bourdieu believed art and sociology were compatible endeavours that could serve to inform one another. A statement which becomes, even if unwittingly, central for both Díaz's and Danticat's methods of character construction and identity building. The meeting points are made more evident in Bourdieu's 1979 book *Distinction*, in which he explicitly refers to the act of sociology as being in flux, akin to the shifting perspective of artists:

...the sociologist of today is, *mutatis mutandis*, in a position quite similar to that of Manet or Flaubert who, in order to realize fully the mode of construction of reality they were inventing, had to apply it to objects traditionally excluded from the realm of academic art, exclusively concerned with persons and things socially designated as important, which explains why they were accused of 'realism.' (2010: 221)

This paragraph succinctly expresses three major concepts found in Díaz's and Danticat's work: fluidity, self-reflexivity, and the construction of an imperfect reality. Throughout this chapter I have attempted to show that the realism both authors portray is individual in nature and participatory in reception, and as such, its successes and failures highly depend on the experience of the reader with such environments and their own conception of identity. Unlike Suzette's character in 'New York Day Women', Danticat and Díaz are active observers in constant political dialogue with the issues and stories they write about. While it is true that their work is not purely sociological (at least not their fictional output), it nonetheless contains a familiarity with their respective communities that is anything but neutral and detached. The main problem arises when their work collides with the expectations of the market, and must be critically assessed not as part of a movement or a diaspora, but rather as individual

outlooks with a gnosis that can transcend the subjectivity of pre-conditioned conceptions of what 'immigrant literature' should read like.

The stages of identity creation start within the parameters of the community (in this case the Haitian or Dominican diaspora in the United States), are followed by individual depiction through fiction, and end in the public perception of both characters and authors. In this sense, politics have the ability to inform fiction whilst fiction can be employed to critique politics. The rejection of the state, which through official public policy often dis-locates immigrants to the margins, and which ultimately shapes identity through its limitations, is questioned, but even the questioning is knowingly incomplete and unreliable, and exercised, albeit subversively, through the pre-established parameters of the current system. However, instead of being unconstructive, the liminal nature of concepts that arise from these restrictions, such as acceptance, rejection, expectations and reality become a fertile ground for extraterritorial fiction and its subsequent usage as a critical tool that instead of categorising and simplifying recognises the inherent fluidity and complexity of diasporic experiences, offering new tangible sociological possibilities through representation.

### **Liminal Extraterritorial Identity in Díaz's Short Stories and Danticat's *The Dew Breaker***

A framework that would help bridge the gap between extraterritorial literature and sociology could be drawn from the theoretical work done by Stuart Hall in the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, Hall's work could be used as a criterion in which all the issues debated in this chapter (from identity to diaspora, from market expectation

to social recognition) converge. In a foreword to *The Fateful Triangle*, a compilation of Hall's essays, Henry Louis Gates Jr. refers to Hall's constant fight against the injustice of arbitrary categorisation, the construction of equivalences and subjective differences which in Gates' words create a:

...hierarchical scaffolding of one kind or another [...] with those in power seizing the authority to produce knowledge about what those differences, arbitrarily elevated over others in importance, signified, and then to act on those differences, or that chain of differences, with devastating real-world consequences. (2017: 11)

Although these imposed differences have been historically used as a method of segregation by the status quo—explicitly seen throughout the history of Hispaniola in a variety of ways<sup>191</sup>—Gates also highlights Hall's reappraisal of marginalised groups reverting these categories in their favour. Gates refers to this as 'Hall's Dilemma', the predicament that, from the basis of imposed classifications, groups are formed; groups that use racial or ethnic pride as a method of resistance, decolonising the properties of essentialisation by 'essentialising themselves'. This is blatant in the history of diasporic groups using overlapping definitions to engage in political participation, as the 'boundaries of nations-within-nations were drawn, with those at the center and those on the periphery locked in a struggle over power rather than a struggle over the discursive terms expressive or reflective of that power.' (2017: 12) Gates argues that this recognition also gave way to disappointment: Hall was disillusioned with a globalised world in which migration and mixing were common occurrences, yet the confines of nationality, race and ethnicity somehow exacerbated their qualities while the systems that upheld them became more and more unjust. However, there were also glimmers of optimism as:

---

<sup>191</sup> See: Chapter I, p 50.

Hall saw pockets of hope in the creative yearnings of marginalized groups laying claim to new 'identifications' and 'positionalities,' and fashioning out of shared historical experience 'signifiers of a new kind of ethnicized modernity, close to the cutting edge of a new iconography and a new semiotics that (was) redefining 'the modern itself' (2017: 13).

This search for new 'identifications' and 'positionalities' could very well be paired with the concept of extraterritorial literature. In looking for new avenues of expression and redressing the limits of colonial thought, Danticat and Díaz reinforce the idea that the concept of diaspora should be less about origins than trajectories.<sup>192</sup> This is further enriched by reading their work in parallel: one can then distinguish the interconnectedness of analogous processes—as in the case of the Trujillo dictatorship seen through different prisms in *Oscar Wao* and *The Farming of Bones*—and observe more closely the commonalities and alterations between the Dominican and the Haitian diaspora, as well as the history of racialised separations within the countries' power dynamics. In this sense, it is immediately apparent that both authors are engaging in an intersectional approach that includes 'positionalities' of a different ilk, which recognise the essentialisation within the clashes of racial segregation, but eventually result in a shared goal of readdressing history and questioning identity—this is made all the more evident in their mutual interviews and co-authored articles. However, far from being a perennial collaboration, the work of Danticat and Díaz, when compared, also shows traces of Hall's theory of difference.<sup>193</sup>

---

<sup>192</sup> As expressed by Paul Virilio's concept of routes instead of roots. See: Chapter II, p. 183.

<sup>193</sup> A theory that is significantly similar and contemporary to Homi Bhabha's concept of 'cultural difference', which he develops in his essay 'DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation' found within *Nation and Narration*. Bhabha argues: 'In erasing the harmonious totalities of Culture, cultural difference articulates the difference between representations of social life without surmounting the space of incommensurable meanings and judgments that are produced within the process of trans-cultural negotiation. [...] Cultural difference

Hall sees 'difference' as an avenue through which the politics of ethnicity and race can be articulated as a positive method of identity creation, rather than in a negative purist way. In his essay 'New Ethnicities', Hall sets out to analyse the shifts in the black cultural politics of the late 1980s by recognising the different historical phases of representation. For Hall, looking at the problematic from the very specific example of 20<sup>th</sup> century British society, the fight against damaging simplification and the exploitation of stereotypes was only the first stage in the struggle for representation. The second phase went beyond issues of essentialism and involved:

...the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category 'black'; that is, the recognition that 'black' is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in nature. What this brings into play is the recognition of the immense diversity and differentiation of the historical and cultural experience of black subjects. (1996: 443)

The concept of 'difference', thus, is grounded upon the basic assumption that there is not a singular 'black experience', just as the work produced by an author belonging to a determined diaspora does not necessarily imply his or her in-depth knowledge of it, or indeed its cultural merit within it or in the larger public sphere. However, Hall also remarks upon the incongruities of representing a marginalised diaspora inside a hegemonic society, where constructions of identity are commonly developed against the symbolic walls of racism, the 'internalisation of the self-as-other' (1996: 445) which Frantz Fanon constantly referred to.<sup>194</sup> The romantic view of black politics and anti-racism as a unilateral force for good is also seen by Hall as another

---

changes the position of enunciation and the relations of address within it; not only what is said but from where it is said.' (1990: 313).

<sup>194</sup> See: Chapter II, p. 133.



method of essentialisation, merely a strategy based on reversals, that further complicates defiance and:

does not make it any easier to conceive of how a politics can be constructed which works with and through difference, which is able to build those forms of solidarity and identification which make common struggle and resistance possible but without suppressing the real heterogeneity of interests and identities, and which can effectively draw the political boundary lines without which political contestation is impossible, without fixing those boundaries for eternity. (1996: 444)

The politics of ethnicity and race predicated in diversity and difference are crucial elements of the examples of extraterritorial literature this thesis has dealt with. In their recognition of shattered histories, and fractures within pre-conceived constructions of identity and pigmentocratic divisions, the works of both Díaz and Danticat exemplify the nuance and contradictions found in immigrant and diasporic individuals. Through their characters, they portray these individuals and their trajectories not merely as representatives of their diaspora, but as stand-alone constructions of their own; communities do play a large role in the constructions of these identities, but perceptions (both by the community and the self) are fluid and shift depending on a variety of circumstances.

However, before looking at the methods through which this difference is articulated, it is important to note that these are portrayed precisely within the constructs of an essentialising society. Throughout his work, Díaz emphasises the schemes of racial (and consequently economic) segregation used by his characters to define themselves within larger paradigms. 'How to Date a Browngirl...' from *Drown* is based upon the subjective presumptions of racial and ethnic categories in relationships, and these are exacerbated by the narrator Yunior in relation to his milieu. Like that

specific short story, there are plenty of other examples that, rather than being throwaway comments designed to further dialogues or plot, distinctively recognise these divisions. In Díaz's second short story collection *This Is How You Lose Her*, these recognitions of difference are shown as resignation towards an unjust system ('He's been talking about the house he wants to buy, how hard it is to find one when you're Latino.' 2013: 53), distrust of anyone outside of one's environment ('With these people I cannot even rely on their voices. The blancos will call your mother a puta in the same voice they greet you with.' 2013: 66) or sweeping generalisations ('Black guys don't understand Spanish girls.' 2013: 20)—the general tone of all these interactions explicitly shows the qualities of the colonial mind-set in the construction of identities within minorities, in which the recognition of common grounds outside one's own propinquity to others is scarce, almost always replaced by a stark mistrust of the Other.

The short story 'Flaca', in *This Is How You Lose Her* is written in the shape of a letter from Yunior to his ex-girlfriend Veronica, a 'whitegirl'<sup>195</sup> whom he met in school. The expectations from his environment in school dictate that such a relationship can only be enacted in a fleeting, exclusively sexual, way—however, both Yunior and Veronica transcend superficialities and engage in a relatively long relationship, one that was not seen positively by Yunior's friends, primarily due to ethnic and racial differences, as Yunior recalls:

I remember: The boys keeping an eye on me. They figured two years ain't no small thing, even though the entire time I never claimed you. But what was nuts

---

<sup>195</sup> Term repeated with this same spelling by Díaz in several of his short stories, designed to emphasise the otherness of other races and ethnicities, reflecting the terminology one would expect from a science book on other species or science fiction taxonomy.

was that I felt fine. I felt like summer had taken me over. I told the boys this was the best decision I'd ever made. You can't be fucking with whitegirls all your life. In some groups that was more than a given; in our group it was not. [...] You were white trash from outside of Paterson and it showed in your no-fashion-sense and you'd dated niggers a lot. I said you had a thing about us and you said, angry, No, I do not. But you sort of did. You were the whitegirl who danced bachata, who pledged the SLUs, who'd gone to Santo Domingo three times already. (2013: 84)

The barriers placed upon cross-cultural relationships become a method of self-affirmation. The hierarchy of cultural assertion dependent on familiarity is countered by the assumptions made by Yunior's friends—they are not particularly insular because they hate whites, but because they cannot construct their own identity without them. Codes are established from the prerogative that groups must reinforce who they are not, in order to know who they are, and these codes are only loosened by an individual's self-reflexivity to them. In this case, the tacit assumption that whitegirls do not dance bachata, never travel to Latin America, or are part of the SLU.<sup>196</sup> Veronica is therefore portrayed, at least from the scope of Yunior's vision, as different from other 'whitegirls', yet not different enough to ever be a part of the diaspora clique.

This usage of 'difference' is further complicated as the prerequisites to be part of one's close circle are shown by Díaz to not have anything to do with a single dimension of race and ethnicity; there are, too, different levels depending on minute factors. In the same collection, in the short story 'Pura', Yunior describes his brother Rafa's relationship with a recent Dominican immigrant:

Remember the Spanish chick, the one who'd been crying over him at the Yarn Barn? Well, turns out she was actually Dominican. Not Dominican like my

---

<sup>196</sup> Sigma Lambda Upsilon or Señoritas Latinas Unidas, a university sorority composed mostly of women of Latin American descent.

brother or me, but *Dominican* Dominican. As in fresh-off-the-boat-didn't-have-no-papers Dominican. (2013: 102).

The radical refusal of Yuniór and Rafa's mother to accept Rafa's girlfriend as one of them, though based superficially on the pigmentocracy of skin tone, is also one of rejection of the past. After all, every member of the Dominican diaspora not born in the United States was, once, *Dominican* Dominican. This enactment of Hall's concept of difference, based upon intricate racial coding and 'first come, first served' basis serves to denote the conscious definitions within a diaspora and how these are decreed individually and without an actual passport or any other sort of material proof to show for it. This, in fact, constitutes a sort of *internalised difference*, whereby the individual's position in society might be incongruous with their self-image, showing the limits of identity construction within different strata. However, this identification also partially escapes the realm of race and ethnicity, especially when considering the self-reconstruction often exercised by first generation immigrants who so often rewrite their own narrative and that of their past to fit into their new milieu. The constant performance of internalised difference through migration and the variety of internal and external interpretations of identity are perhaps no more directly and poignantly portrayed than in Danticat's 2004 novel *The Dew Breaker*.

*The Dew Breaker's* outline is designed to transgress the formal limits of a novel by being divided into nine chapters that could also work as nine loosely connected short stories. The main thread that links these stories is found in the first chapter 'The Book of the Dead', the first-person account of Ka, a sculptor and a second-generation Haitian immigrant, who travels from New York to Florida with her father in order to sell a sculpture to a famous Haitian television personality. The sculpture itself acts as a

symbolic representation of Haitian struggle and constitutes ‘a three-foot mahogany figure of my father naked, kneeling on a half-foot-square base, his back arched like the curve of a crescent moon, his downcast eyes fixed on his very long fingers and the large palms of his hands’ (2004: 3). The sculpture was made by Ka to represent her father’s yearlong stint in a Haitian prison, a subjective reconstruction based upon brushes of information, but one that does not reflect the whole true story.

To the Haitian diaspora in Brooklyn, Ka’s father is an earnest barber and a sympathetic landlord to the men who live in the basement of his building (whose stories are found in the remaining chapters of the book), his characteristic facial scar, assumed to be the product of a childhood accident, makes him an instantly recognisable figure in the neighbourhood. However, the crucial twist in the story directly resists the idea that identities are constructed within and not outside representation. Ka’s father (whose name is significantly withheld throughout the book) eventually breaks the sculpture before it is delivered and confesses to his daughter that his previous life in Haiti was anything but moral, that he was, in fact, not a victim but a murderer.

History and fiction converge when it is revealed that Ka’s father was part of François Duvalier’s paramilitary force, colloquially known as the *Tontons Macoutes*. Members of this group, who responded directly to Duvalier’s orders, were involved in extremely violent acts of repression designed to quell the enemies of the regime—physical threats, murder, rape, torture and everything in between were a customary part of the job. The exact details of Ka’s father’s crimes are revealed in the final, eponymous, story of the cycle ‘The Dew Breaker’, where it is made evident that he worked in the militia since his teenage years for over a decade, and was trusted with

specific assassinations—his final one being the mission to kill a Baptist minister who allegedly used his speeches to deliver anti-Duvalier messages. After burning a Baptist church with his fellow Macoutes, Ka's father brings the minister to prison, where the minister resists torture by attacking him with the broken leg of a chair, thereby marking Ka's father with the scar that would subsequently become part of his idiosyncrasy. In retaliation, Ka's father fires a shot that immediately kills the minister. However, coincidence grants him a window for redemption as the minister's stepsister Anne sees Ka's father exiting the prison wounded and assumes him to be an escaped prisoner. Eventually they fall in love and make plans to leave Haiti and settle in the United States, without being aware of the coincidences that brought them together. The final reveal, which tints the entire book with more than a hint of tragic irony, is that Anne happens to be Ka's mother—rendering Ka as the product of both torture and redemption, of oppression and resistance.<sup>197</sup>

Thus, the trope of the immigrant reconstructing his or her personal history in a new land is turned upside down and shifted inwardly. Ka's father's function within the diaspora in Brooklyn is therefore dislocated from his role within the grander Haitian community—while in the past he enacted the will of the powerful with ruthless aggression, his reconditioning as a respectable member of the diaspora, nurturing those less privileged by being a sympathetic landlord and helping to bring up a sensitive daughter, implies that individuals act and react depending on their milieu. However, there is an underlying tragedy in the lost stories and injustices of the past not

---

<sup>197</sup> A very rich character backstory which is sadly not expanded further by Danticat in the rest of the book, or indeed in other books. Unlike Díaz, it is interesting to note that, although there are close similarities between her characters, Danticat never uses them in different books, choosing to isolate them in their respective novels or short stories.

being truly rectified: Danticat primarily uses *The Dew Breaker* to question the limits of redemption, never judging or truly castigating Ka's father<sup>198</sup>—but although he has to live with the ignominy of a secret story, he is still the agent of his own narrative, choosing freely to reveal his past to his daughter, leaving the reprimand up to her, as Ka is left to reflect:

I had always thought that my father's only ordeal was that he'd left his country and moved to a place where everything from the climate to the language was so unlike his own, a place where he never quite seemed to fit in, never appeared to belong. The only thing I can grasp now, as I drive way beyond the speed limit down yet another highway, is why the unfamiliar might have been so comforting, rather than distressing, to my father. And why he has never wanted the person he was, is, permanently documented in any way. (2004: 27)

It is perhaps only through Danticat's documentation, rather than in the documentation done by her characters, that a semblance of objectivity can be found. 'The Book of the Dead' is titled in reference to Ka's father's obsession with the ancient Egyptian text, and allusions to the (im)possibility of redemption through the proverbial balance of the afterlife seem to mirror his constant existential struggles—the ultimate price for his crimes being that no matter how respectable his externalised identity could be, his irredeemable past overpowers his internal identity, a substantial side of his personality which cannot be bargained with or truly left behind. The politics of representation become, therefore, the representation of politics, and the desperation of the individual (represented by Ka's father and his tortured state of mind) arises, rather than from repentance, from the complete lack of comprehension of a violent past that is greater than his crimes. A past which cannot be atoned for, but should not, for that reason, be kept silent—the first step towards Ka's father's recovery is not in

---

<sup>198</sup> Recurring themes in the relationship between Ka and her father which were summarised by Mary Gallagher in the triad of concealment, displacement and disconnection. In Munro, 2010. pp. 147-160.

performing good deeds for the diaspora, but in confessing his crimes to his daughter. Once again, Danticat shows that it is only through the elocution of the past that the present can be explained, and hope in the future can be glimpsed.

In that sense, the varied representations of identity construction, deconstruction and reconstruction employed by Díaz and Danticat are testimony to the glaring difference of individual experiences found within diasporas, experiences which derive part of their depth from their conflicts and misconstructions. The contradictions of their characters are expressed on a variety of levels: lack of stasis versus fluidity, racial and ethnic predispositions towards the Other, subjectivity versus societal positioning, acceptance and rejection. These are all played out from the basis of decolonisation—the omnipresent idea that these categories have been, in one way or another, imposed by years of an enclosed thought that is difficult to evade but nonetheless instantly discernible. And it is perhaps in the self-reflexive documentation of the existence of these classifications that extraterritorial literature as a practice can identify the cracks in the foundations of negative representation, and use the same tools of demarcation to tear down the fortifications of essentialism, one wall at a time.



## Epilogue

Analysing extraterritorial language and the authors who employ it demands the need for discerning the boundaries that would attempt to enclose it. The liminal nature of what is and is not extraterritorial can only be recognised by being cognisant of the term's relationship to pre-established epistemological boundaries which, to borrow a phrase from Stuart Hall, often help to 'draw the political boundary lines without which political contestation is impossible, without fixing those boundaries for eternity' (1996: 444). From the consecration of literary canons to the linguistic taxonomy of Area Studies, the only pathway to challenge these methods of restriction starts from the awareness of their inherent fallibilities through the deconstruction of their limiting narratives. As I have attempted to show throughout *Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial*, the strategies of discursive resistance instigated by the extraterritorial language are devised from a marginal perspective that is self-reflexive and unwilling to yield to simplistic classifications.

Any review of classifications must begin by questioning the overarching term *Weltliteratur*, often acknowledged to be the starting point of reference by those working within the field of Comparative Literature. It places Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (a man who died 183 years ago) as the father of the dialogue between languages and texts from different parts of the world. He famously stated:

[...] the writer as a man and a citizen will love his native land, but the native land of his Poetic Powers and his poetic work is the Good, the Noble, the Beautiful, limited to no particular province and to no particular land; and these he seizes and develops wherever he finds them. In this he is like the eagle whose gaze ranged freely over all lands. What is then love of one's

native land, and what is a patriotic influence? If a writer seeks all his life long to fight prejudice and narrow-mindedness, to bring enlightenment to the minds of his people, to refine their taste, to ennoble their judgements, is that not the best service he can render his country? (Goethe in Strich, 1971: 17)

Alluring as these thoughts might be,<sup>199</sup> we must remember they were limited to the transactions between one nation and another, never predicting the possibility of authors who could transcend and complicate what should be (but never is) a like for like exchange. Goethe's idea of reaching out beyond self-contained literatures was by all means principled,<sup>200</sup> but it was (like so much of the discourse that stems from it) articulated from a position of linguistic privilege, and as such, struggled to see beyond his European habitus to envisage issues of inequality and material possession—two concepts well documented only a few decades later in *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who, aware of Goethe's proto-internationalism, used their notion of production and exchange to exemplify the parochial approach of a self-sufficient economy. Recognising the interconnected role of production in transnational frameworks, they wrote:

In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climates. [...] and as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. (2004: 64)

---

<sup>199</sup> Discounting the evident linguistic limitations of antiquated gendering, which start from the salient predisposition to refer to writers solely as 'men'.

<sup>200</sup> Pascale Casanova defends Goethe's stance from a historical point of view, placing his speeches in the context of early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe, and hinting at his marginal credentials, she writes: 'As a member of a nation that was a newcomer to the game, challenging French literary and intellectual hegemony, Goethe had a vital interest in understanding the reality of the situation in which his nation now found itself. Displaying the perceptiveness commonly found among newcomers from dominated communities, not only did he grasp the international character of literature, which is to say its deployment outside national limits; he also understood at once its competitive nature and the paradoxical unity that results from it' (Casanova, 2004: 40).

We are now aware, with the benefit of almost two centuries of hindsight, that in the latter half of the twentieth century these same idealistic thoughts were consolidated as tactics of cultural commerce.<sup>201</sup> The term World Lit became, like World Music and World Cinema, a method of incongruous simplification that aimed to sell the idea of cosmopolitanism to those willing and able to buy it. However, as often occurs throughout *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels show flashes of precise anticipation when analysing the material consumption of nationality as a cultural product by the middle classes:

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of Reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. (2004: 64)

This dialectic between ‘national ground’ and the ‘cosmopolitan character’ could be construed today as two sides of the same coin in literary theory. Heads: The stubborn prevalence of national literatures in academia and bookshelves, the levering of single-language specialisation which Comparative Literature as a practice aims to bridge but fails to fully challenge. Tails: The simplification of books in a foreign language, Amazon recommendation lists and festival circuits that would prefer World Literature to endure as a marketing tool and stand entirely separate to whichever Core language happens to be prevalent. Operating close, but not inside of, these circles of exoticism and literary essentialism, extraterritoriality exists to subvert these models. By dealing with different linguistic codes, territories and periods in a single text, its sheer presence and problematic categorisation can serve as a platform to question pre-existing canons and the need for canonising itself.

---

<sup>201</sup> See: *What is World Literature?* by David Damrosch, 2003.

Extraterritoriality is, from a theoretical and material point of view, difficult to delineate—an approach that, in turn, serves to challenge both nationalist and cosmopolitan simplifications. It should not, by any means, become another classification with strict regulations and outlined parameters, but rather, retain its inherent marginality by celebrating its incompleteness and potential for destabilising the codes of the prevalent ideology. As S.S. Prawer observed in his seminal study of Marx's relationship to literature *Karl Marx and World Literature*:

'Marx believed, then, that though many authors are spokesmen for a dominant class, great literature is able to rise above a prevalent ideology. When this happens, it may constitute an area of relatively unalienated labour, a realm in which an author can express himself—to a considerable extent—as a total human being'" (1976: 404)

However, as unalienated and revolutionary as the texts might be, the marginality of a literary extraterritorial approach, far from being impervious to scrutiny, can always be questioned from its positioning in the larger networks of global social hierarchy. In the case of Díaz and Danticat, by reviewing their status as citizens of the Northern Hemisphere and the privileged placing of their published books in the global literary stage and the capital social relations that sustain it.<sup>202</sup>

In her critique of contemporary Comparative Literature, *Death of a Discipline*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak strongly argues that substantial changes to the practice can only be enacted by recognising the (untranslatable) living cultural forms of the

---

<sup>202</sup> The full citizenship of Danticat and Díaz within the United States and its literary establishment can be always questioned from the standpoint of race, as they themselves have constantly done so. However, their celebrity status within those literary circles give them an indubitable advantage in terms of exposure and international prestige over authors publishing their work from other nations. In that sense, exercising self-reflexivity is paramount to maintaining their condition as 'voices from the margins', a condition that will undoubtedly be questioned the further their names and oeuvres become established.

Southern Hemisphere, without pandering to the tourist approach of reading works in translation employed by many comparative methodologies executed from the North. Clear in her dismissal of any possibility of significant change to Comparative Literature as a taught practice that would stem from such a perspective, she writes:

We cannot try to open up, from the inside, the colonialism of European national language-based Comparative Literature and the Cold War format of Area Studies, and infect history and anthropology with the "other" as producer of knowledge. From the inside, acknowledging complicity. No accusations. No excuses. Rather, learning the protocol of those disciplines, turning them around, laboriously, not only by building institutional bridges but also by persistent curricular interventions. The most difficult thing here is to resist mere appropriation by the dominant. (2003: 11)

Spivak delineates a clear separation between 'reterritorialized metropolitan migrants [...] willing to collaborate with the South' (2003: 10), implied to be well-versed with, and even benefitting from, the structures laid out by colonialism, and those students, academics and authors 'physically "based" in the global South [...] sufficiently out of touch with the idiomaticity of non hegemonic languages.' (2003: 10) The position of Díaz and Danticat would currently place them in the former category,<sup>203</sup> but as I have argued throughout this thesis, part of the idiosyncrasy of the extraterritorial language (not yet thoroughly studied by Spivak or by other academics working in the field of Comparative Literature) is the transposition of cultural codes through the subversion of 'hegemonic' (or as I have referred to them

---

<sup>203</sup> Although, interestingly, Spivak recognises the inherent lexical fluidity of Haitian students in the pages that follow: 'There are Haitians and West Africans in those CUNY remedial classes whose imaginations are crossing and being crossed by a double aporia—the cusp of two imperialisms. I have learned something from listening to their talk about and in Creole/French/so-called pidgin and English-as-a-second-language-crossing-into-first - the chosen tongue. I have silently compared their imaginative flexibility, so remarkably and necessarily much stronger, because constantly in use for social survival and mobility, than that of the Columbia undergraduate, held up by the life-support system of a commercializing anglophone culture that trivializes the humanities.' (2003: 15).

'Core') languages, and consequently, the frameworks that help to sustain them. In this sense, extraterritorial literature presents us with the unique challenge of analysing authors who have already processed the cultural translations found within their work, itself the legacy of a transition between hemispheres, leaving critics and students to read the text in its finalised extraterritorial language—one that is wary of the complexities and inequalities of colonialism, yet still deals with the familiar codes of literature to those reading it in the Northern Hemisphere. The challenge, therefore, is not in reading the extraterritorial authenticity of the text but rather in questioning the fluidity of these transactions and how they relate to pre-established epistemologies or world-system hierarchies. Only then can we find avenues to resist complete appropriation from a determined Hemisphere that would claim the final result as exclusively theirs, for the extraterritorial is always found in-between.

It is true, however, that Danticat and Díaz represent a sample of a small portion of the Americas, and many parallels can be drawn between their specific case as inhabitants of the North and the literature created in and out of the Southern Hemisphere of the continent and the Caribbean over the last twenty-five years. A comparison can be made, for instance, with the work of Roberto Bolaño, whose multiplicity of Spanish registers in his novel *The Savage Detectives* (devoting an entire section of more than 400 pages to mimic the accents and localised jargon of a variety of Latin American voices in the continent and throughout the world), would too, constitute an extraterritorial approach—one that instead of crossing linguistic

boundaries pushes monolingualism<sup>204</sup> to its limits, with idiosyncrasies that are partially lost in the English translations of the text, yet have nonetheless been widely appreciated by public and critics alike. On the issue of national literatures, Bolaño<sup>205</sup> famously stated:

In fact, a writer can have many homelands, and sometimes the identity of that homeland depends greatly on what he's writing at the moment. It is possible to have many homelands, it occurs to me now, but only one passport, and that passport is obviously the quality of one's writing. (2012: 34)

This proverbial passport would, too, play the role of an extraterritorial identity card, one that is issued not merely through the quality of the writing (for this would presuppose a subjective approach), but mostly through the invocation of the extraterritorial characteristics that have been sketched throughout this thesis. These are characteristics evidenced in the corpus of both Díaz and Danticat which could also be tested against the backdrop of other works from authors with similar boundary-crossing backgrounds.

This is a pertinent point when choosing how to teach extraterritorial literature within the current academic frameworks. The work of Díaz and Danticat, for example, could fit into the syllabus of a comparative course on contemporary fiction from the United States, where students with a background in Latin American literature (or even Francophone literature) could have an advantage when

---

<sup>204</sup> For a thorough historical charting and defence of the term monolingualism, see David Gramling's recent study *The Invention of Monolingualism*, in which he argues that the idiom 'has no more claim on reasonableness or even efficiency than do the many other alternate ways of organizing or not organizing language' (2016: 28).

<sup>205</sup> Whose personal biography as an author was clearly marked by the relocations he experienced—he was born in Chile, grew up in Mexico, and wrote most of his work in Catalonia.

deciphering both authors' multi-lingual references. This, of course, if the texts are taught in their original versions, inside of an institution in the Northern Hemisphere, where English is the prevalent language—the framing of such a course would change radically if this was not the case. Ultimately, a Comparative Literature course on extraterritoriality that draws its primary readings from as vast a pool as possible would be the prime method of portraying the leit motifs that link these works together, which raises questions on how exactly does one recognise an extraterritorial work.

As way of establishing loose guidelines, the reading and creation of extraterritorial literature would have to find commonalities in the following areas. First: the notion of language as a fallible tool, which results in the subversion of codes through experimentation and the constant questioning of the systems established by colonial histories. This can be exemplified by the mixture of different registers and the use of multi-referential code-switching techniques, as is the case with Díaz; or the use of Haitian sayings and linguistic symbols in the work of Danticat—methods which are exercised using the codes of Core languages, but which ultimately operate in a 'third language' (with varying degrees of formal experimentalism or conservativeness) designed to subvert pre-conceptions of what language itself should *read* like. Although both Díaz and Danticat employ most of their extraterritorial language through written speech, these translations of cultural codes do not have to necessarily mean translations of a purely literary vein. The approach of *Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial* has focused solely on written works, but there is no reason why examples of extraterritorial language could not be found in oral traditions, visual art, or in more abstract methods of



communication, such as the use of *kipus* (knotted ropes) in ancient Inca culture.<sup>206</sup> The framework of extraterritoriality should remain open to any avenue for linguistic decolonisation, including the potential perception of language as wordless knowledge.

This leads us to the second property of the extraterritorial approach: the recognition of the incompleteness and imbalances of history, which demands the need to fill the gaps consciously left empty or obscured by authoritarian discourse. These silences can be better reconstructed through the perspective of those marked by them, challenging 'official' stories through the production of history 'from below' (instead of leaving the interpretation to external, panoptical scopes) and, when faced with the inequalities of speaking through a language in which the original history did not develop in, engaging in strategies of 'diverting without leaving' in order to generate a counterbalancing historiography in the spaces currently organised by the hegemonic power of the turn.

Third: the elocution of individual identity inside of a diaspora, or a larger communal group, and all the incongruences this sense of belonging or dislocation implies. Understanding the moments when the private becomes public (and vice versa), and the internalised essentialisation derived from centuries of colonial

---

<sup>206</sup> As Manny Medrano, a junior academic currently working on the deciphering of *kipus* recently stated: 'We think of language as either spoken or written down, [...] but the *kipu* really takes that and breaks that boundary and makes language something that can be felt, something that can be touched, and something that can be handled. [...] Being able to look at the past not just as Indiana Jones or trying to discover a golden idol in a cave, but to help the process of getting history told from the perspective of the people who have been conquered.' (in Guerra, 2017).

thinking, racism, or gender bias, which can only be challenged from a self-reflexive stance, being aware of the losses and gains involved in processes of extraterritorial identity creation, and maintaining 'difference within unity' at all times.

Lastly, the recognition that all methods of classification, be they taxonomies of social status, the pigmentocracy of racism, or the consolidation of literary canons, are opposed to the idea of extraterritoriality, and as such, its epistemology is always fluid, never set in stone. This wide berth in terminology allows us to use the extraterritorial scope to analyse work from a wide range of authors and engage in comparative approaches between texts that would usually be confined to their language or place of origin. Although *Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial* has focused on Edwidge Danticat and Junot Díaz, and consequently the close relationship between the Caribbean and the United States, this same theory of extraterritorial literature could be applied in future instances as a framework for comparative studies between authors hailing from different regions and their ensuing histories, placing an emphasis on drawing intersectional connections that would help us gain a better understanding on the characteristics highlighted above, constantly challenging the soon-to-be out dated frameworks of literature as a single national notion.

The complete dislocation of literature and nationality would imply that all authors construct their narratives within imagined borders; however, this is still a futuristic concept, as segregation and presumption still abound in the contemporary literary world. A lot can be said about the cognitive dissonance between the creation of literature and the reception of an author's work through

pre-conceptions of nationality in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. A good illustration of this can be found in the case of Kazuo Ishiguro, who, from the early days of his publishing career, had to deal with a series of essentialist critiques working within the British literary establishment due to his Japanese name. Critics often equated his ethnicity with his minimalist sensibilities (an assumption he categorically denied on several occasions).<sup>207</sup> These are debates which are still relevant today, and which will only become more complex and pertinent as humans (and consequently authors) draft their personal narratives from an array of mixed backgrounds.<sup>208</sup>

In recent years, discussions on the emergence of ‘global writers’ have not merely been restricted to purely academic texts, and can be found in mainstream articles devoted to reviewing the current condition of transnational authors. Two such examples can be found in Pankaj Mishra’s piece for the *Financial Times* ‘Beyond The Global Novel’ and in a 2013 editorial for *N+1 magazine* titled ‘World Lite: What Is Global Literature?’, which analysed the current material state of ‘World Lit’ in the grander scheme of the decline of literary consumption, and its reliance on academic circles to maintain a semblance of relevance.<sup>209</sup> This was a fair

---

<sup>207</sup> Chen, K. (2015) ‘Kazuo Ishiguro: My Own Private Japan. Asian American Writers Network’. [online] Available at: <http://aaww.org/kazuo-ishiguro-my-own-private-japan/> [last accessed 2/1/2018].

<sup>208</sup> The importance of migration in today’s societies has been widely discussed from sociological and anthropological perspectives by contemporary studies such as Stephen Castles, Hein de Haas and Mark J. Miller’s *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*.

<sup>209</sup> ‘A developed internationalist literature would superficially resemble the globalized World Lit of today in being read by and written for people in different countries, and in its emphasis on translation (and, better yet, on reading foreign languages). But there would be a few crucial differences. The internationalist answer to the riddle of World Lit — of its unsatisfactoriness — lies in words never

argument at the time, but one which has since been partially debunked by the rising mainstream success and marketing valence of authors such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie<sup>210</sup> or NoViolet Bulawayo. Without running the risk of false prognostication, all signs indicate that the future will have more space for literary work by authors whose personal stories have lapsed across national boundaries.

We can use the term extraterritorial to refer to Teju Cole (who was born in Michigan, grew up in Lagos and now lives in Brooklyn), the author of the novel *Open City*, which features a variety of locations and cultural transpositions in the post-9/11 world. We can also use it to describe Jean Malaquais (a writer of Jewish-Polish origin who settled in France), whose 1947 novel *Planète sans visa* uses almost fifty characters of diverse backgrounds and nationalities to recreate Nazi-occupied Marseille in 1942. Even Franz Kafka, with his decentred Jewish-Austrian German language could easily be called an extraterritorial author. The list of writers from a multiplicity of backgrounds dealing with a variety of languages and historical processes/translations in their work keeps growing exponentially: The work of Valeria Luiselli, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Akhil Sharma, Sofia Samatar, Lesley Nneka Arimah, Jenny Zhang, Zia Haider Rahman, Neel Mukherjee, Laila Lalami, Taiye Selasi, Warsan Shire, Monica Ali, Yiyun Li and Leïla Slimani, constitute a few examples of the growing exposure of contemporary authors who deal with extraterritorial

---

associated with it. These include project, opposition, and, most embarrassingly, truth. Global Lit tends to accept as given the tastes of an international middlebrow audience; internationalism, by contrast, seeks to create the taste by which it is to be enjoyed. The difference, crudely, is between a product and a project. An internationalist literary project, whether mainly aesthetic (as for modernism) or mainly political (as for the left) or both aesthetic and political, isn't likely to be very clearly defined, but the presence or absence of such a project will be felt in what we read, write, translate, and publish.' (N+1 Editors, 2013).

<sup>210</sup> See: Obi-Young, 2017.

issues at present time. Even though there is not a fixed period or, evidently, determined place of birth, for extraterritorial authors, everything points towards an increase in the ranks: the more borders crossed by authors and the hazier the lines of national identity become, the more useful the concept of extraterritoriality will be.<sup>211</sup>

As the world and its imagined barriers shrink further, so will the narratives shaped by migration become increasingly entangled. These can only be resolved with engagement instead of detachment. As has been argued throughout *Reconfiguring the Extraterritorial*, the intersectional approach proposed by the extraterritorial framework finds its force in the unresolved complications and the challenging of previous totemic epistemologies. Indeed, the evolution of the extraterritorial should be a challenge of present, future, and past studies of literature and language in which extraterritoriality is only the first stage of recognition towards an approach that, parallel to questioning the frameworks of the past, moves forward untethered from the limitations of imposing thought, constantly questioning the social placing of these authors and their work. The 'loss

---

<sup>211</sup> The study of contemporary migrant literature in Europe is rapidly becoming an established practice under the umbrella of Comparative Literature, with Germany leading the way with its growing interest in *Migrantenliteratur*. See: Yasemin Yildiz's *The Postmonolingual Condition: Beyond the Mother Tongue* and Sandra Vlasta's *Contemporary Migration Literature in German and English*. Likewise in the Francophone world with the array of studies of *écriture migrante*—see: Adama Coulibaly and Yao Louis Konan's *Les écritures migrantes: De l'exil à la migration littéraire dans le roman francophone*, which focuses on contemporary Francophone novelists working in Europe or Daniel Chartier's essay 'Les origines de l'écriture migrante. L'immigration littéraire au Québec au cours des deux derniers siècles' which analyses the work of authors who emigrated to Quebec such as Kim Thúy, Abia Farhoud, Nadia Ghalem, Dany Laferrière.

of a centre,' which George Steiner saw as the ignition that spurred the 'language revolution' performed by extraterritorial authors should not be construed as the breaking of the compass. Instead, the collapse of hegemonic narratives should be seen as an opportunity to steer the ship towards clearer, more inclusive, shores. The radical fluidity of migratory thought, however sheltered or excluded, will never cease working.

## Bibliography

Abbott, E. (1988). *Haiti: The Duvaliers and Their Legacy*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.  
\_\_\_\_\_. (2011, revised ed.). *Haiti: A Shattered Nation*. London: Overlook Duckworth.

Accilien, C. Adams, J. and Méléance, E. (eds.) (2006). *Revolutionary Freedoms: A History of Survival, Strength and Imagination in Haiti*. Coconut Creek, FL: Caribbean Studies Press.

Adams, R. L. (2006) *History at the Crossroads: Vodú and the Modernization of the Dominican Borderlands*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Adichie, C. (2013) *Americanah*. London: Fourth Estate.

Adorno, T. (2005) *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*. Translated by E. F. N. Jephcott. London: Verso.

Alarcón, D. (2013) Junot Díaz and Francisco Goldman Live in New York [audio]. Available online at: <<https://soundcloud.com/radioambulante/junot-diaz-francisco-goldman>> [last accessed 1/9/2013].

Alonso, C. J. (1998) *The Burden of Modernity: The Rhetoric of Cultural Discourse in Spanish America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Alter, A. (2017) Next From the Novelist Junot Díaz? A Picture Book. *The New York Times* [online]. Available online at: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/18/books/junot-diaz-islandborn.html>> [last accessed 1/1/2018].

Althusser, L. (2008) *On Ideology (Radical Thinkers Series 3)*. London: Verso.

Alvarez, J. (1999) *Something To Declare*. New York: Plume.

Alvarez, J. et al (2013) Two Versions of a Dominican Tale. *The New York Times* [online]. Available online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/01/opinion/two-versions-of-a-dominican-tale.html>> [last accessed 2/3/2015].

Amnesty International (2015) *Amnesty International Report 2014/15 - Dominican Republic*. 25 February 2015, available online at: <<http://www.refworld.org/docid/54f07dfce.html>> [last accessed 1/3/2015].

Anderson, B. (2006) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Anderson, P. (1998) *The Origins of Postmodernity*. London: Verso.

Antoine, R. (1981) Les écrivains Français et les Antilles. *Caribbean Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (December, 1981), pp. 54–56. Mona: University of the West Indies Press.

Anzaldúa, G. and Keating, A. (eds.) (2002) *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*. New York: Routledge.

Anzaldúa, G. (1987) *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute.

Appadurai, A. (1996) *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Press.

Appiah, K. A. (2007) *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. London: Penguin.

Apter, E. (1999) *Continental Drift: From National Characters to Virtual Subjects*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2013) *Against World Literature: On The Politics of Untranslatability*. London: Verso Books.

Aristide, J.-B. (intr.) (2008) *Jean-Bertrand Aristide Presents: Toussaint Louverture, The Haitian Revolution*. New York: Verso.

Atkins, G. and Wilson, L. (1998) *The Dominican Republic and the United States: From Imperialism to Transnationalism*. Atlanta: University of Georgia Press.

Auerbach, E. (2003) *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition*. Translated by W. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Auster, P. (1982) *The Invention of Solitude*. London: Faber & Faber.

Bakhtin, M. (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination – Four Essays*. Translated by C. Emerson and M. Holquist. Dallas, TX: University of Texas Press.

Barthes, R. (1976) *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*. Translated by R. Miller. New York: Hill and Wang.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2009, new ed.). *Mythologies*. Translated by A. Lavers and C. Smith. London: Vintage Classics.

Bebel-Gisler, D. (1976) *La langue créole, Force Jugulée*. Paris: Editions L'Harmattan.

Bellegarde-Smith, P. (1990) *Haiti: The Breached Citadel*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Benítez-Rojo, A. (1997, 2nd ed.) *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective (Post-Contemporary Interventions)*. Translated by J.E. Maraniss. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.



Benjamin, W. (1940) On the Concept of History. Redmond, D. Available online:<<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm>>. Marxists [online] [Last accessed 25/07/2018].

Berger, J. and Mohr, J. (2010, new ed.) *A Seventh Man*. London: Verso Books.

Bergner, G. (2017) Danticat's Vodou Vernacular of Women's Human Rights. *American Literary History*, Volume 29, Issue 3, 1 September 2017, pp. 521–545.

Bernabé, J, Chamoiseau, P and Confiant, R. (1993) *Eloge de la créolité*. Luxembourg: Messageries du Livre.

Bhabha, H. et al (eds). (2002) *Cosmopolitanism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Bhabha, H. (1990) *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge.

\_\_\_\_\_, (2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.

Boehmer, E. (2005) *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bolaño, R. (2009) *The Savage Detectives*. Translated by N. Wimmer. London: Picador.

\_\_\_\_\_(2012) *Between Parentheses*. Translated by N. Wimmer. London: Picador.

Bongie, C. (1998) *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bosch, J. (1998) *Cuentos Dominicanos*. Santo Domingo: Letras Grandes.

Bourdieu, P. (2008) *Political Interventions: Social Science and Political Action*. Translated by F. Poupeau. London: Verso.

\_\_\_\_\_(2010) *Distinction*. Translated by R. Nice. London: Routledge Classics.

\_\_\_\_\_, and Wacquant, L. (1992) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Bowie, A (ed.)(2008) *Schleiermacher: Hermeneutics and Criticism (And Other Writings)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boyden, M, and Goethals, P. (2011) Translating the Watcher's Voice: Junot Díaz's The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao into Spanish. *Meta*. Volume 56, 1, March 2011, pp. 20–41.

Braidotti, R. (2012) *Nomadic Literature: The Portable Rosi Braidotti*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Brathwaite, E. K. (1984) *History of the Voice: Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry*. London: New Beacon Books.

Braudel, F. (1969) *Ecrits sur L'Histoire*. Paris: Flammarion.

\_\_\_\_\_(1985) *On History*. Translated by S. Matthews. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

\_\_\_\_\_(2002, new ed.) *The Mediterranean*. Translated by S. Reynolds. London: Penguin.

\_\_\_\_\_(1995) *A History of Civilizations*. Translated by R. Mayne. London: Penguin.

Brazier, J and Mannur, A. (eds.) (2003) *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Buck-Morss, S. (2000) Hegel and Haiti. *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (Summer, 2000), pp. 821-865

\_\_\_\_\_(2009) *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Bulawayo, N. (2014) *We Need New Names*. London: Vintage Books.

Calvet, L.-J. (1988) *Linguistique et colonialisme*. Paris: Payot & Rivages.

Carpentier, A. (1949) *El reino de este mundo*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.

Carpio, R. G. (2016) *Now Check It: Junot Díaz's Wondrous Spanglish*, in *Junot Díaz and the Decolonial Imagination*, (eds. Hanna, M, Hardford Vargas, J and Saldívar, J. D.). Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books.

Carr, D. (2014) *Experience and History: Phenomenological Perspectives on the Historical World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Casanova, P. (2007) *The World Republic of Letters*. Translated by M. DeBevoise. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Casimir, J. (2011) Haiti's Need for a Great South. Translated by E. Colon and M. Koerner. *The Global South*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring 2011), pp. 14-36.

Castles, S, de Haas, H and Miller, M. (2013, 5<sup>th</sup> ed) *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Celayo, A and Shook, D. (2008) In Darkness We Meet: A Conversation with Junot Díaz. *World Literature Today*, 16.

Cervantes, (2017) Stateless People, Undocumented Immigrants Face Uncertainty In The Dominican Republic. Available online at:  
<<https://kjzz.org/content/458539/stateless-people-undocumented-immigrants-face-uncertainty-dominican-republic>>. KJZZ [online] [Last accessed 28/12/2017].

Césaire, A. (1997 ed.) *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*. Paris: Presence Africaine.

Céspedes, D. et al. (2000) Fiction Is the Poor Man's Cinema: An Interview with Junot Díaz. *Callaloo*. Vol. 23, No. 3, Dominican Republic Literature and Culture (Summer, 2000), pp. 892-907.

Chambers, I. (1993) *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*. London: Routledge.

Chamoiseau, P and Confiant, R. (1999) *Lettres créoles*. Paris: Gallimard.

Chamoiseau, P. (1998) *Texaco*. Translated by R.-M. Rejouis and V. Vinokurov. London: Granta.

Chancy, M. (1997) *Framing Silence: Revolutionary Novels by Haitian Women*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2013) *From Sugar to Revolution: Women's Visions of Haiti, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic*. Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Charles, J.-C. (1982) *De si jolies petites plages*. Paris: Stock.

Chartier, D. (2002) 'Les origines de l'écriture migrante. L'immigration littéraire au Québec au cours des deux derniers siècles'. *La sociabilité littéraire*. Volume 27, number 2, 2002.

Chatterjee, P. (1993) *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Chen, K. (2015) Kazuo Ishiguro: My Own Private Japan. Asian American Writers Network'. [online] Available at: <<http://aaww.org/kazuo-ishiguro-my-own-private-japan>> [last accessed 2/1/2018].

Chi'en, E. (2004) *Weird English*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ciabattari, J. (2015) The 21<sup>st</sup> Century's 12 Greatest Novels. BBC Culture [Online]. Available at: <<http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20150119-the-21st-century-12-best-novels>> [Last accessed 1/1/2018].

Clarke, K. M. and Thomas, D. A. (eds.) (2006) *Globalization and Race: Transformations in the cultural production of blackness* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Clifford, J. (1988) *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-century Ethnography, Literature and Art*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. (1997) *Routes: Travel And Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2013) *Returns: Becoming Indigenous in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Cole, T. (2012) *Open City*. London: Faber & Faber.

Coulibaly, A. and Conan, Y.L. (2015) *Les écritures migrantes: De l'exil à la migration littéraire dans le roman francophone*. Paris: Editions L'Harmattan.

Cowart, D. (2006) *Trailing Clouds: Immigrant Fiction in Contemporary America*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Cresci, K. (2013) Junot Díaz: "We exist in a constant state of translation. We just don't like it." *Buenos Aires Review*. Available online at: <<http://www.buenosairesreview.org/2013/05/diaz-constant-state-of-translation>> [Accessed 17/02/2015].

Dalleo, R. (2011) *Caribbean Literature and the Public Sphere: From the Plantation to the Postcolonial*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

Damrosch, D. (2003) *What Is World Literature?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Danticat, E. (1994) *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. New York: Soho Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1996) *Krik? Krak!* New York: Soho Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1998) *The Farming of Bones*. New York: Soho Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2002) *After the Dance: A Walk Through Carnival in Jacmel, Haiti*. New York: Vintage.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2004) *The Dew Breaker*. New York: Vintage.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2005) *Anacaona, Golden Flower, Haiti, 1490 (Royal Diaries)*. New York: Scholastic.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2007) *Brother, I'm Dying*. New York: Vintage.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2007) Junot Díaz by Edwidge Danticat. *BOMB Magazine* [online].

Available online at: <<http://bombmagazine.org/article/2948/>> (Last Accessed 19/1/2015).

\_\_\_\_\_ (2010) *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work*. New York: Vintage.

\_\_\_\_\_ (ed.) (2010) *Haiti Noir*. New York: Akashic Noir.

\_\_\_\_\_ and Alwan, R. (eds.) (2011) *The Best American Essays 2011*. Boston, MA: Mariner Books.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2013) *Claire of the Sea Light*. New York: Vintage.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2014) Gabriel García Márquez: An Appreciation. *The New Yorker* [online] <<http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/gabriel-garca-mrquez-an-appreciation>> [last accessed: 1/2/2017].

\_\_\_\_\_ (2017) Poetry In A Time of Protest. *The New Yorker* [online]

<<http://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/poetry-in-a-time-of-protest>> [last accessed: 1/2/2017].

De Certeau, M. (1992) *The Writing of History*. Translated by T. Conley. New York: Columbia University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2011, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by S. Rendall. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

De las Casas, B. (1992) *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*. Translated by A. Pagden. London: Penguin.

Del Castillo, P. (2016) Pulitzer Prize winner Junot Díaz takes a phone call from Paul. Literary Manhattan. Available online at: <<http://www.literarymanhattan.org/2016/10/pulitzer-prize-winner-junot-diaz-takes-a-call-from-paul>> [last accessed: 10/11/2016].

Del Pilar Blanco, M. (2013) Reading the Novum World: The Literary Geography of Science Fiction in Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* in *Surveying the American Tropics: A Literary Geography from New York to Rio*, (eds. Fumagalli, M.C. et al.). pp. 49-74. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Deleuze, G and Guattari, F. (1986) *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Translated by D. Polan. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

\_\_\_\_\_(2013, new ed.) *A Thousand Plateaus*. Translated by B. Massumi. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

\_\_\_\_\_(2016, new ed) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by R. Hurley, M. Seem and H. R. Lane. London: Penguin Books.

Depestre, R. (1980) *Bonjour et adieu à la Négritude*. Paris: Robert Laffont.

Derby, L. (2009) *The Dictator's Seduction: Politics and the Popular Imagination in the Era of Trujillo*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Derrida, J. (2001) *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. Translated by P. Mensah. London: Routledge.

\_\_\_\_\_(2004) *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*. Translated by P. Mensah. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press.

Díaz, J. (1997) *Drown*. New York: Riverhead Books.

\_\_\_\_\_(2007) *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. New York: Riverhead Books.

\_\_\_\_\_(2008) *La breve y maravillosa vida de Oscar Wao*. Translated by A. Obejas. New York: Vintage Books.

\_\_\_\_\_(2012) Monstro. *The New Yorker* [online]. Available online at: <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/06/04/monstro>> (Last Accessed 2/1/2017)

\_\_\_\_\_(2013) *This Is How You Lose Her*. New York: Riverhead Books.

\_\_\_\_\_(2014) MFA vs. POC. *The New Yorker* [online]. Available online at: <<https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/mfa-vs-poc>> (Last Accessed 2/1/2018)

Diederich, B. (2000) *Trujillo: Death of a Dictator*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers.

Doyle, L. and Winkiel, L, (eds) (2005) *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Dubois, L, (2005) *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*. Cambridge: Belknap Press.

\_\_\_\_\_(2012) *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*. New York: Picador

\_\_\_\_\_, and Garrigus J, D. (2006) *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean, 1789-1804: A Brief History with Documents*. New York: Bedford.

Du Bois, W.E.B. (2000, new ed) *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Dover Publications.

\_\_\_\_\_(1996, ed. Sundquist, E.) *The Oxford W. E. B. Du Bois Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, U.S.A.

Durrani, H. (2012) Up Close and Literary with Edwidge Danticat. Scholastic Art & Writing Awards [online]. Available online at: <<http://blog.artandwriting.org/2012/06/21/up-close-and-literary-with-edwidge-danticat>> [Last Accessed 2/10/2017].

Eagleton, T, Jameson, F and Said, E. (1990) *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Edmonson, L. (1986) Black America as a Mobilizing Diaspora: Some International Implications. in *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* (ed. Sheffer, G.). London: Croom Helm.

Edwards, B. H. (2001) The Uses of Diaspora. *Social Text* Spring, 2001 19(1 66). pp. 45-73.

\_\_\_\_\_(2003) *The Practice of Diaspora Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Elliott, A and du Gay, P. (2009) *Identity in Question*. London: SAGE.

Fanon, F. (2008 new ed.) *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by R. Philcox. London: Pluto Press.

\_\_\_\_\_(2001 new ed.) *The Wretched of The Earth*. Translated by R. Philcox. London: Penguin Modern Classics.

Fassler, J. (2012) 'The Baseline Is, You Suck': Junot Diaz on Men Who Write About Women. *The Atlantic* [online]. Available online at: <<http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/09/the-baseline-is-you-suck-junot-diaz-on-men-who-write-about-women/262163>> [last accessed: 1/2/2017].

Fennell, L. (2015) Across Borders: Migrancy, Bilingualism and the Reconfiguration of Post-colonialism in Junot Diaz's Fiction. [MA Thesis]. Lund University, Lund, Sweden.

Ferguson, J. (1992) *Dominican Republic: Beyond the Lighthouse*. London: Latin America Bureau.

\_\_\_\_\_(2003) Migration in the Caribbean: Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Beyond. Available online at: <<http://www.oas.org/atip/regional%20reports/migrationinthecaribbean.pdf>> [last accessed 29/1/2015].

- Ferrer, A. (2014) *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Fick, C. E. (1991) *The Making of Haiti: The Saint-Domingue Revolution From Below*. Knoxville: The University of Kentucky Press.
- Fischer, S. (2004) *Modernity Disavowed*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Forsdick, C and Høgsbjerg, C. (eds.) (2017) *The Black Jacobins Reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2017) *Toussaint Louverture: A Black Jacobin in the Age of Revolutions*. London: Pluto Press.
- Friedländer, S. (1984) *Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death*. London: Harpers Collins Publishers.
- Fumagalli, M. C. (2015) *On the Edge: Writing the Border Between Haiti and the Dominican Republic*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Gallagher, S. (1997) Linguistic Power: Encounter with Chinua Achebe. *The Christian Century*. 12 March 1997, pp. 260-272.
- Ganesan, S. (2017) Pulitzer winner Junot Díaz is too successful to write his next novel. Star 2 [online]. Available online at: <<http://www.star2.com/culture/2017/11/26/author-junot-diaz/#UV2KUxTIAfh6qIzK.99>> [Last accessed: 24/12/2017].
- García Canclini, N. (2004) *Diferentes, desiguales y desconectados. Mapas de la interculturalidad*. Barcelona: Gedisa.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2005) *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- García-Peña, L. (2016) *The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Garraway, D. (ed.) (2008) *Tree of Liberty: Cultural Legacies of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- Garrigus, J. D. (2006) *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gates Jr. H. L. (2004) *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*. Oxford: OUP USA.
- \_\_\_\_\_. in Hall, S. (ed. Mercer, K) (2017) *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Geggus, D. (ed.) (2001) *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ (ed.) (2014) *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.

\_\_\_\_\_ and Fiering, N. (eds.) (2009) *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Gellner, E. (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Giles, P. (2002) *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Gilroy, P. (1993) *The Black Atlantic - Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2002) *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*. London: Routledge.

Girard, P. (2011) *The Slaves Who Defeated Napoleon: Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian War of Independence, 1801-1804*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

Glissant, E. (1992) *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2008) Creolization in the Making of the Americas in *Caribbean Quarterly* Vol. 54, No. 1/2, The 60th Anniversary Edition: Literature and Ideas (March - June, 2008), pp. 81-89.

Graham, J. F. (ed.) (1985) *Difference in Translation*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Gramling, D. (2016) *The Invention of Monolingualism*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. Translated by G.N. Smith. London: International Publishers.

Grutman, R. (2016) Migration and Territoriality in Deleuze and Steiner: Metaphors and Mixed Messages in *Migrancy and Multilingualism in World Literature*, eds. Knauth, K and Liao, P. pp.171-185. Berlin: LIT Verlag,

Guerra, G. (2017) Harvard student helps crack mystery of Inca code. *The Boston Globe* [online]. Available online at: <<http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/massachusetts/2017/12/26/how-harvard-freshman-helped-crack-mystery-inca-code/asr6iflpLoFXNQHA3AQdwO/story.html>> [Last accessed: 26/12/2017].

Hall, S and Du Gay, P. (1996) *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Hall, S. (ed. Rutherford, J.) (1990) Cultural Identity and Diaspora, in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.



\_\_\_\_\_ (eds. Baker, H.A. Diawara, M. and Lindeborg, R.) (1996) Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance, in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, pp. 16-60 Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1996) New Ethnicities in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, pp. 441-449. London: Routledge.

\_\_\_\_\_ (ed. Mercer, K) (2017) *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Harris, W. (1999) *The Selected Writings of Wilson Harris*. London: Routledge.

Hobsbawm, E. (2013) *Fractured Times: Culture and Society in the 20th Century*. London: Little, Brown.

Horne, G. (2015) *Confronting Black Jacobins: The United States, the Haitian Revolution, and the Origins of the Dominican Republic*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Human Rights Watch (2015) We Are Dominican: Arbitrary Deprivation of Nationality in the Dominican Republic. [report] Available online at: <<https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/07/01/we-are-dominican/arbitrary-deprivation-nationality-dominican-republic>> [Last accessed 25/12/2017].

Instituto Cervantes (2014) Español: Una Lengua Viva. [report] Available online at: <<http://eldiae.es/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/El-espa%C3%B1ol-lengua-viva-2014.pdf>> [Last accessed 10/01/2015].

Inter-American Court of Human Rights (2016) Denationalization and Statelessness in the Dominican Republic. [report] Available online at: <<http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/multimedia/2016/DominicanRepublic/dominican-republic.html>> [Last accessed 25/12/2017].

Inter-American Court of Human Rights (2017) IACHR Welcomes Willingness of Dominican Republic to Comply with Recommendations. [Press release] Available online at: <[http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media\\_center/preleases/2017/087.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/preleases/2017/087.asp)> [Last accessed 25/12/2017].

Jaggi, M. (2001) George and his Dragons. *The Guardian* [online]. Available online at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/mar/17/arts.highereducation>> [Last Accessed 19/6/2017].

James, C.L.R. (1963) *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. London: Vintage.

Jameson, F. (1986) Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism. *Social Text No. 15* [Autumn, 1986], pp. 65-88. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Jakobson, R. in Venuti, L. (2008) *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation (in The Translation Studies Reader)*. London: Routledge.

- Jeffries, S. (2014) Stuart Hall's cultural legacy: Britain under the microscope. *The Guardian* [online]. Available online at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/feb/10/stuart-hall-cultural-legacy-britain-godfather-multiculturalism>> [Last Accessed 25/12/2017].
- Kaplan, A. (2005) *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture (Convergences: Inventories of the Present)*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kakutani, M. (2017) Transcript: President Obama on What Books Mean to Him. *The New York Times* [online] Available online at: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/16/books/transcript-president-obama-on-what-books-mean-to-him.html>> [last accessed: 1/2/2017].
- Kat, M. (2013) Edwidge Danticat On Being Prolific, Her Influences, And Her Advice to Debut Novelists. LitJuice [online] Available online at: <<http://litjuice.com/2013/11/14/edwidge-danticat-on-being-prolific-her-influences-and-her-advice-to-debut-novelists>> [last accessed: 23/12/2017].
- Kramsch, C. (1998) *Language and Culture*. Oxford: OUP.
- Kristeva, J. (1994) *Strangers to Ourselves*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Laclau, E (2012) *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism (Radical Thinkers)*. London: Verso.
- Laferrière, D. (1985) *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer*. Monaco: Les Editions du Rocher.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1994) *Chroniques de la dérive douce*. Paris: Grasset & Fasquelle.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1994) *Why Must a Black Writer Write About Sex?* Translated by D. Homel. Toronto: Coach House Press Inc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2008) *Je suis un écrivain japonais*. Paris: Grasset & Fasquelle.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2013) *The Enigma of Return*. Translated by D. Homel. London: MacLehose Press.
- Lamming, G. (ed. Bogue, A.) (2010) *Caribbean Reasonings – The George Lamming Reader: The Aesthetics of Decolonisation*. Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers.
- Lassalle, D and Weissmann, D. (eds.) (2014) *Ex(tra)territorial: Reassessing Territory in Literature, Culture and Language / les territoires littéraires, culturels et linguistiques en question*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Lefebvre, C. (2006) *Creole Genesis and the Acquisition of Grammar: The Case of Haitian Creole*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.
- Lemos Horta, P. and Robbins, B. (eds.) (2017) *Cosmopolitanisms*. New York: NYU Press.
- Leventhal, G. S. (2004) George Steiner, Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman. [online] Available online at: <<http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/holocaust/steinerls.html>> [Accessed 2/2/2017]

Lispector, C. (1964) *The Passion According to G.H.* Translated by I. Novey (2002). New York, NY: New Directions Books.

López-Calvo, I. (2005) *God and Trujillo: Literary and Cultural Representations of the Dominican Dictator*. Miami: University Press of Florida.

Lukács, G. (1971) *The Theory of the Novel*. Translated by A. Bostock. London: Merlin Press.

Luiselli, V. (2017) *Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in 40 Questions*. Minneapolis, MN: Coffee House Press;

Machado Saez, E. (2015) *Market Aesthetics: The Purchase of the Past in Caribbean Diasporic Fiction*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press.

Malaquais, J. (1949) *Planète sans visa*. Paris: Phébus.

Marrero Aristy, R. (1974) *Over*. Santo Domingo: Taller.

Marshall, P. (2009) *Brown Girl, Brownstones*. New York, NY: Dover Publications Inc.

Martineau, J-C. (2012) *Haïti en six leçons: Opinions et idées*. Paris: Kiyikaat Editions.

Marx, K. and Engels, F. (2004) *The Communist Manifesto*. London: Penguin Classics.

Massumi, B. (2002) The Political Economy of Belonging and the Logic of Relation in *Parables of the Virtual*, pp.68-88. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

McDonald, S. N. (2005) Dominican Republic calls Junot Díaz unpatriotic and strips him of award. *The Washington Post* [online]. Available online at: <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2015/10/26/dominican-republic-calls-junot-diaz-unpatriotic-and-strips-him-of-award/?utm\\_term=.862dec8312f5](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2015/10/26/dominican-republic-calls-junot-diaz-unpatriotic-and-strips-him-of-award/?utm_term=.862dec8312f5)> [last accessed: 1/2/2017]

McGurl, M. (2011) *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mezzadra, S and Neilson, B. (2013) *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Mignolo, W. (2000) *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Patterson, NJ: Princeton University Press.  
\_\_\_\_\_(2005) *The Idea of Latin America*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.  
\_\_\_\_\_(2012) *La Idea de América Latina: La herida colonial y la opción decolonial*. Barcelona: Gedisa.

- Mishra, P. (2013) Beyond The Global Novel. *The Financial Times* [online] 27 September. Available at: <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/6e00ad86-26a2-11e3-9dc0-00144feab7de.html#axzz3CzwGyGDB>> [last accessed 11/09/2014].
- Moreau de Saint-Méry, L. E. (1797) *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*. [online] available online at: <<https://archive.org/details/descriptiontopog00more>> [last accessed: 26/11/2017].
- Moreno, M. (2007) Debunking Myths. Destabilizing Identities: a Reading of Junot Diaz's "How to Date etc.". *Afro-Hispanic Review*, 26.2, 2007, 103-117
- Moretti, F. (2013) *Distant Reading*. London: Verso.
- Morrison, T. (1993) *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. New York: Vintage.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1993) *Nobel Lecture*. [online] Available online at: <[http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/1993/morrison-lecture.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1993/morrison-lecture.html)> [Accessed 2/2/2015]
- Mukerji, C and Schudson, M. (1991) *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Munro, M. (ed) (2010) *Edwidge Danticat: A Reader's Guide*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2012) *Exile and Post-1946 Haitian Literature: Alexis, Depestre, Ollivier, Lafèrrière, Danticat*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- N+1 Editors (2013) World Lite: What Is Global Literature? *n+1 Magazine*, Issue 17: The Evil Issue [Fall 2013]. New York: n+1.
- Naipaul, V.S. (2011) *The Enigma of Arrival*. London: Picador.
- Nandy, A. (2009, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) *The Internal Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*. Oxford: OUP India.
- Neilson, B. (1999) On the New Cosmopolitanism, *Communal/Plural: Journal of Transnational and Cross-Cultural Studies*, 7(1): 111-124.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2014) Knowledge on the Move: Between Logistics and Translation in *Translation: a transdisciplinary journal*, (spring 2014): pp.128-146.
- Nesbitt, N. (2008) *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press.
- Obi-Young, O. (2017) As Sales Approach the Million Mark, Is *Americanah* Now Adichie's Signature Novel?. *Brittle Paper* [online]. Available online at: <<https://brittlepaper.com/2017/03/sales-approach-million-mark-americanah-adichies-signature>> [last accessed: 2/1/2018].

Ortíz, F. (1995, new ed.) *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Papastergiadis, N. (1999) *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization and Hybridity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

\_\_\_\_\_(2012) *Cosmopolitanism and Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Patterson, O. (1967) *An Absence of Ruins*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press Ltd.

\_\_\_\_\_(1998) *The Ordeal of Integration: Progress and Resentment in America's Racial Crisis*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press.

Parish, H.R. and Wagner R.S. (1967) *The Life and Writings of Bartolomé de Las Casas*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.

Pennycook, A. (2006) *Global Englishes and Transcultural Flows*. London: Routledge.

Perez Firmat, G. (1990) *Do The Americas Have A Common Literature?* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Pope Atkins, G and Wilson, L.C. (1998) *The Dominican Republic and the United States: From Imperialism to Transnationalism*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Popkin, J. D. (ed.) (2007) *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Revolution*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

\_\_\_\_\_(2012) *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution*. London: Wiley-Blackwell.

Pratt, M.L. (1991) Arts of the Contact Zone. *Profession*. pp. 33–40.

\_\_\_\_\_(1992) *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge.

Prawer, S.S. (1976) *Karl Marx and World Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Prendergast, C. (ed.) (2004) *Debating World Literature*. London: Verso.

Price-Mars, J. (1953) *La République d'Haïti et la République Dominicaine*. [e-book] Available online at: Les classiques des sciences sociales  
<[http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/price\\_mars\\_jean/Republique\\_Haiti\\_t1/Republique\\_Haiti\\_t1.html](http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/price_mars_jean/Republique_Haiti_t1/Republique_Haiti_t1.html)> [Accessed 10/09/2014].

\_\_\_\_\_(1957) *De Saint-Domingue à Haïti*. [e-book]. Les classiques des sciences sociales. Available online at:  
<[http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/price\\_mars\\_jean/de\\_saint\\_domingue\\_a\\_haiti/de\\_saint\\_domingue\\_a\\_haiti.html](http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/price_mars_jean/de_saint_domingue_a_haiti/de_saint_domingue_a_haiti.html)> [Accessed 10/09/2014].

\_\_\_\_\_(2009) *Ainsi parla l'Oncle (suivi de Revisiter l'Oncle)*. Montréal: Mémoire d'Encrier.

- Quijano, A. and Wallerstein, I. (1992) Americanity as a concept, or the Americas in the modern world-system. *International Journal of Social Sciences*, No. 134, Nov. 1992, UNESCO, Paris. pp. 549-557.
- Rabinow, P. (2007) *Marking Time: On the Anthropology of the Contemporary*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Railton, B. (2011) Novelist-Narrators of the American Dream: The (Meta-) Realistic Chronicles of Cather, Fitzgerald, Roth, and Díaz, *American Literary Realism* 43, no. 2 (2011), p. 136.
- Renda, M. (2001) *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Ricoeur, P. (2004) *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press
- Rouse, I. (1993) *The Tainos: Rise & Decline of the People who Greeted Columbus*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Roy, A. (2002) *Power Politics*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Ruiz-Grossman, S. (2017) *Trump Administration Is Sending Haitians Back To A Country Still Mired In Disaster*. The Huffington Post [online]. Available online at: <[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/haiti-tps-protections\\_us\\_5a14b33ce4b09650540e1bdb](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/haiti-tps-protections_us_5a14b33ce4b09650540e1bdb)> [last accessed: 19/12/2017].
- Rushdie, S. (2010) *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. London: Vintage.
- Sagás, E. (2000) *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Said, E. (1984) *Reflections on Exile: And Other Literary and Cultural Essays*. London: Granta.
- \_\_\_\_\_(1994) *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage.
- \_\_\_\_\_(2000) *Out of Place: A Memoir*. London: Granta.
- Saldivar, J. D. (2011) *Trans-Americanity: Subaltern Modernities, Global Coloniality, and the Cultures of Greater Mexico (New Americanists)*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_(2011) Conjectures on “Americanity” and Junot Díaz’s “Fukú Americanus” in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. *The Global South*, Volume 5, Number 1, Spring 2011, pp. 120-136
- Sartre, J.P. (1965) *Black Orpheus*. Translated by J. MacCombie. *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Autumn, 1964 - Winter, 1965), pp. 13-52.

Saunders, F. (2016) Where on earth are you? *London Review of Books*. Vol. 38 No. 5, Vol. 3. March 2016 pp. 7-12.

Saussy, H (ed.) (2006) *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*. Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Scarano, R. (2012) Interview: Junot Díaz Talks Dying Art, the Line Between Fact and Fiction, and What Scares Him Most. *Complex* [online]. Available online at: <<http://complex.com/pop-culture/2012/12/junot-diaz-interview>> [last accessed: 1/2/2017].

Segura, G. (2017) Junot Díaz talks Dominican identity, immigration and the (complicated) American Dream. *America: The Jesuit Review* [online]. Available online at: <<https://www.americamagazine.org/arts-culture/2017/05/04/junot-diaz-talks-dominican-identity-immigration-and-complicated-american>> [last accessed: 1/12/2017].

Spivak, G. (2005) *Death of a Discipline*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.  
\_\_\_\_\_. (2006) *In Other Worlds: Essays In Cultural Politics*. London: Routledge.  
\_\_\_\_\_. in Venuti, L. (2008) The Politics of Translation. In: *The Translation Studies Reader*. London: Routledge.  
\_\_\_\_\_. (2015) *Nationalism and the Imagination*. Kolkata: Seagull Books.

Stanford Friedman, S. (2004) Bodies on the Move: A Poetics of Home and Diaspora. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* Vol. 23, No. 2 (Fall, 2004), pp. 189-212. Tulsa, OK: University of Tulsa.

Steiner, G. (1965) A Kind of Survivor. *Commentary*. February 1965. pp. 32-38.  
\_\_\_\_\_. (1967) *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.  
\_\_\_\_\_. (1972) *Extraterritorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution*. London: Penguin.  
\_\_\_\_\_. (1987) *George Steiner: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
\_\_\_\_\_. (1998) *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press U.S.A.

Stewart, B. (1996) Outsider With a Voice. *The New York Times* [online]. Available online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/1996/12/08/nyregion/outsider-with-a-voice.html>> [last accessed: 1/2/2017].

Strich, F. (1971) *Goethe and World Literature*. Wesport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Stringer, D. (2013) Passing and the State in Junot Díaz's "Drown". *MELUS*, pp. 111-126. Volume 38 Issue 2 June 2013.

Suarez, L. (2006) *The Tears of Hispaniola: Haitian and Dominican Diaspora Memory*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press.

- Tavárez Varela, L. C. (2014) Kreñòl: A new language in the Hispaniola?, in Explorations [online]. Available online at: <<http://explorations.ucdavis.edu/docs/2014/tavarez-varela.pdf>> [Last accessed 2/6/2017].
- Thomas, P. (1997) *Down These Mean Streets (Thirtieth Anniversary Edition)*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Tölölyan, K. (1996) Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies Volume 5*, Number 1, Spring 1996 pp. 3-36
- Torres, L. (2007) In the contact zone: code-switching strategies of Latino writers *MELUS*, 32 (1) 75-96.
- Torres-Saillant, S. (2006) *An Intellectual History of the Caribbean*. New York, NY: Palgrave McMillan.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2010) Introduction to Dominican Blackness. New York, NY: CUNY [Online] Available online at: <[https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/dsi/upload/Introduction\\_to\\_Dominican\\_Blackness\\_Web.pdf](https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/dsi/upload/Introduction_to_Dominican_Blackness_Web.pdf)> [last accessed 20/12/2017].
- Trouillot, M. (1997) *Silencing The Past*. New York: Beacon Press.
- United Nations Development Programme (2016) The Human Development Report 2016, Human Development for Everyone [report]. Available online at: <<http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report>> [Last accessed 25/7/2018].
- Valiela, I. (2015) The Distorted Lens: Immigrant Maladies and Mythical Norms in Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College [online]. Available online at: <<http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1009>> [Last accessed: 1/1/2018].
- Vargas Llosa, M. (1998) *La fiesta del chivo*. Madrid: Alfaguara.
- Venuti, L. (2008) *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. London: Routledge.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2012, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition) *The Translation Studies Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Verna, C. (2017) *Haiti and the Uses of America: Post-U.S. Occupation Promises*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Vieux-Chauvet, M. (2010) *Love, Anger, Madness: A Haitian Triptych*. Translated by R.-M. Réjouis and V. Vinokur. New York, NY: Modern Library Inc.
- Virilio, P. (2008) *Open Sky*. London: Verso.



- Vlasta, S. (2015) *Contemporary Migration Literature in German and English*. Leiden: Brill.
- wa Thiong'o, N. (1986) *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. London: Heinemann Educational.
- Waisman, S. in Caulfield, C and Davis, D. (eds.) (2010) *Writing South, Living North in A Companion to US Latino Literature*. Cambridge: Monografías A.
- Walcott, D. (1993) *The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory*. New York: Farrar, Strauss.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1998) *What the Twilight Says*. New York: Farrar, Strauss.
- Wallerstein, I. (2004) *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Walkowitz, R. (2007) *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2017) *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Walters, J. (2015) Author Junot Díaz called unpatriotic as Dominican Republic strips him of award. *The Guardian* [online]. Available online at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/oct/25/junot-diaz-author-dominican-republic-haiti-immigration>> [last accessed 02/03/2016].
- Walvin, J. (2017) *Sugar: The World Corrupted, From Slavery to Obesity*. London: Robinson.
- Watchtel, E. (2016) *The Best of Writers and Company: Interviews With 15 of the World's Greatest Authors*. Windsor, Canada: Biblioasis.
- Weinberger, E. (2005) Statement for "The Post-National Writer," PEN World Voices, 21 April 2005 [online]. Available online at: <[http://www.respiro.org/Issue17/Non\\_fiction/non\\_fiction\\_weinberger.htm](http://www.respiro.org/Issue17/Non_fiction/non_fiction_weinberger.htm)> [Accessed 11/11/2014].
- White, H. (2010) *The Fiction of Narrative: Essays on History, Literature, and Theory, 1957-2007*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2014) *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Wilentz, A. (1990) *The Rainy Season: Haiti – Then and Now*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Wood, J. (2014) On Not Going Home. *London Review of Books* Vol. 36 No. 4, 20 February 2014 pp. 3-8. London: LRB Limited.

Wright, C. (2008) Writing in the Grey Zone: Exophonic Literature in Contemporary Germany. *GFL: German as a Foreign Language* No. 3, pp. 26-46.

Yildiz, Y. (2011) *The Postmonolingual Condition: Beyond the Mother Tongue*. New York: Fordham University Press.